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1819-1891.
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Lowell,

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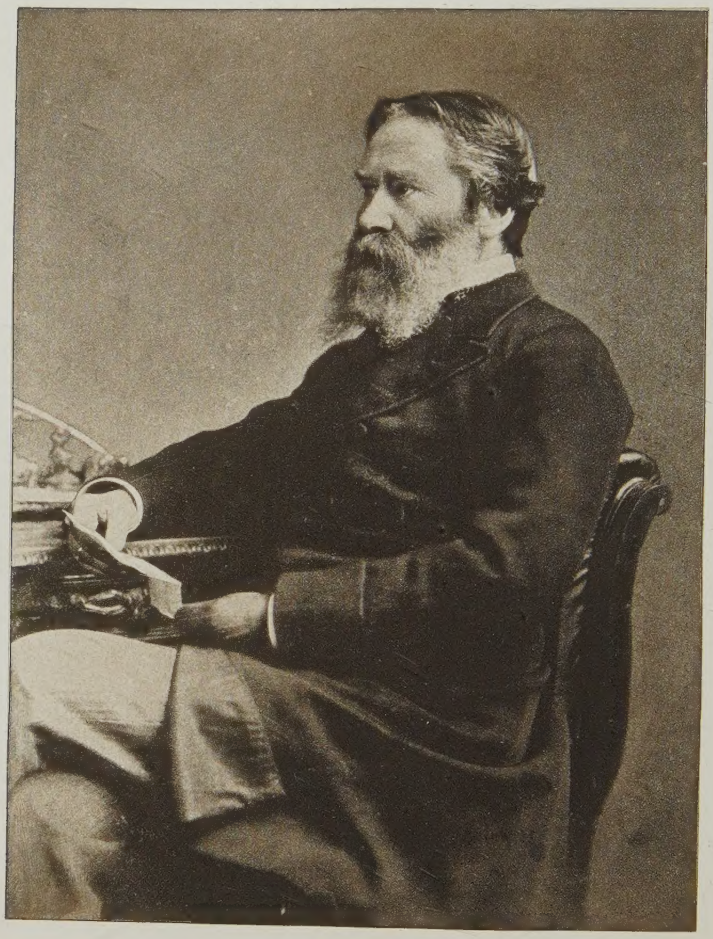

LETTERS OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

EDITED BY

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON

VOLUME I.

DOMINICAN COLLEGE
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SAN RAFAEL

NEW YORK
HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS
1894

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EDITORIAL NOTE

In making the following selection from the great mass of Mr. Lowell's letters which was in my hands, my attempt was to secure for it, so far as possible, an autobiographic character. And, in the main, this has not been difficult, for few writers have given in their letters a more faithful representation of themselves, and of few men is the epistolary record more complete from youth to age. But portions of every man's life are essentially private, and knowledge of them belongs by right only to those intimates whom he himself may see fit to trust with his entire confidence. Vulgar curiosity is, indeed, always alert to spy into these sanctities, and is too often gratified, as in some memorable and mournful instances in recent years, by the infidelities of untrustworthy friends. There was nothing in Mr. Lowell's life to be concealed or excused. But he had the reserves of a high and delicate nature, reserves to be no less respected after death than during life, and nothing will, I hope, be found in these volumes which he himself might have regretted to see in print. Mr. Lowell, indeed, made to the public in his poetry such revelation of his inward experiences and emotions as he alone had the right to make, and such as may well suffice to

satisfy all legitimate interest in the spiritual development of the poet and in the nature of his most intimate and sacred human relations. Read together, his poems and his letters show him with rare completeness as he truly was.

So many of his friends and correspondents have put me under obligations by intrusting to me the letters he had addressed to them, that I will not undertake to name them all. I beg them each to accept my thanks. One difficulty only I have felt in regard to the use of these letters. Some of them contained such expressions of affection for those to whom they were addressed, or of admiration for their work, as might seem intended for their eyes alone. And yet these expressions were so characteristic of their writer's nature and of the regard in which he held his friends, that to omit them all would be to leave an imperfect and maimed impression of the quickness and warmth of his sympathies and the charm of his intercourse. If I have printed any letter which the person to whom it was addressed may regret to see in type, I beg him to pardon me for the indiscretion, on the ground of its exhibition of traits essential to the likeness of the self-drawn portrait of his friend.

To one of my own as well as of Mr. Lowell's nearest friends, Mr. Leslie Stephen, I am glad to owe so much as makes indispensable a special acknowledgment of my debt. The letter with which he has favored me, describing Lowell as he knew him, is a sketch which for its vital resemblance no other hand could have drawn.

Some letters which I should have been glad to use

have reached me too late; others have perished or are not now to be found. But it is a satisfaction to believe that, however much they might have added to the interest of these volumes, they would have afforded no new aspect of their writer.

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

SHADY HILL, CAMBRIDGE, MASS.
July, 1893.

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LETTERS OF

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

I

1819–1839

EARLY LIFE.—COLLEGE DAYS.—RUSTICATION IN CONCORD.—IN THE HARVARD LAW-SCHOOL.—FIRST LITERARY VENTURES.

LETTERS TO R. T. S. LOWELL, W. H. SHACKFORD, G. B. LORING, C. U. SKATES.

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in 1819, on the 22d of February, a day dear to Americans as the birthday of Washington.

There was a happy conjunction of stars at his birth. Family stock, parents, condition in life, time, and place, all were of the best.

His father, the Reverend Charles Lowell, was a man of gracious character and rare personal qualities. His presence was striking and comely, and his looks and manners corresponded in their benignity with the sweetness and simplicity of his nature. As a clergyman he was unusually beloved, and he discharged his clerical duties with devout fidelity and with quick and tender sympathies. He was a lover of books, and he possessed more culture, both literary and social, than most of the

clergy, his contemporaries. Mrs. Lowell was of an old Orkney family, and in her blood was a tincture of the romance of those solitary Northern isles. It was from her that her son believed himself to have inherited his love of nature and his poetic temperament.

The home at Cambridge, called Elmwood, after some fine English elms that stood in front of the house, was about four miles from Boston, where Dr. Lowell's parish lay. The house was spacious, built in colonial times, and had an air of comfort and of old-fashioned dignity.

It stood in pleasant grounds, of no great extent, but ample enough for lawn and garden and orchard and pasture and belts of trees. The country back of it was a farming region, with large spaces of solitary woods and open meadows. Fresh Pond, the haunt of herons and other shy birds and land-creatures, lay half a mile away. The whole district, though so near the city, was not yet suburbanized, and its people retained a rustic simplicity of life and character such as has almost disappeared, even in the remoter parts of New England, swept away by the flood of change during the last fifty years.

Elmwood stood fronting upon a lane, between two roads. Between it and the village—as it then was—of Cambridge, was much open space, pasture-land or mowing, which afforded good roaming-ground for schoolboys. To the right, looking eastward from the house, rose a low eminence, called Symonds' Hill, overhanging the river Charles, of which a bright stretch could be seen beyond.

In his "Cambridge Thirty Years Ago," Lowell has described the scene as it was in his childhood. Approach-

ing the village "from the west, by what was then called the New Road (it is called so no longer, for we change our names whenever we can, to the great detriment of all historical association), you would pause on the brow of Symonds' Hill to enjoy a view singularly soothing and placid. In front of you lay the town, tufted with elms, lindens, and horse-chestnuts, which had seen Massachusetts a colony, and were fortunately unable to emigrate with the Tories by whom, or by whose fathers, they were planted. Over it rose the noisy belfry of the college, the square brown tower of the church, and the slim yellow spire of the parish meeting-house, by no means ungraceful, and then an invariable characteristic of New England religious architecture. On your right, the Charles slipped smoothly through green and purple salt-meadows, darkened here and there with the blossoming black grass as with a stranded cloud-shadow. Over these marshes, level as water, but without its glare, and with softer and more soothing gradations of perspective, the eye was carried to a horizon of softly rounded hills. To your left hand, upon the Old Road, you saw some half-dozen dignified old houses of the colonial time, all comfortably fronting southward."

The most stately of these houses was that known as the Craigie House, already illustrious as having been the headquarters of Washington in 1776, and destined before long to receive a new and not less enduring fame as the home of Longfellow. At the end of the New Road towards Cambridge stood a line of six noble willow-trees, monuments of the stockade erected as a defence of the little settlement in its earliest days, and commemorated

by Lowell, when a young man, in his "Indian Summer Reverie," and again, in mature years, in his "Under the Willows." These two poems should be read by those who would gain a knowledge of the scenes familiar to his boyhood, and learn how the intensity of his affection for his native place deepened the sentiment with which he cherished the memories and associations of his happy childhood.

He was the youngest of the household of four brothers and two sisters. He was a handsome boy and his mother's darling. There was nothing precocious in his intelligence, but from his earliest days he was sensitive to the influences of Nature and a keen observer of the aspects of her life. He had the poetic temperament, which showed itself in his quick emotions and ready sympathies. His development was healthy; he was full of boyish spirits, liking out-doors better than the school-room, and acquiring more through his unconsciously exercised powers of observation than through lessons conned from books. His first schooling was at a dame-school in Cambridge.

Lowell has told some of his childish reminiscences in a little poem inserted in the Introduction to the First Series of "the Biglow Papers." It is the record of conditions of childhood which have long since passed away, together with the simplicity of life which made them possible; but the record, as he says, will not seem wanting in truth to those survivors of the old time "whose fortunate education began in a country village."

His father's nature was hospitable, and his family connection so wide that the boy had early the chance of see-

ing a pleasant side of social life. His knowledge of the world outside his immediate surroundings was extended by his being taken frequently as a companion by his father on his long drives to exchange Sunday services with his clerical brethren in country towns and villages—drives often a good day's journey from home. It was on these excursions that he learned much of the characteristics of the then almost unmixed Yankee population of New England—a knowledge which was, later, to stand him in good stead.

When he was eight or nine years old he was sent as a day-scholar to the boarding-school of Mr. William Wells, close to Elmwood. Mr. Wells was an Englishman, of good breeding as well as good learning. He carried on his school as nearly after an English fashion as was possible under widely different conditions. His discipline was sometimes sharp and severe, but he made his boys learn Latin, and in after-years "Parson Wilbur" showed the benefit of his instruction.

Few of the boy's letters have been preserved, and there is nothing in them to distinguish them from those of any happy and healthy child. They afford pleasant little glimpses of his life. Here are two written to his brother Robert, who was at the school kept by Mr. Bancroft, at Round Hill, Northampton:

TO MASTER ROBERT T. S. LOWELL

Jan. 25, 1827.

My dear brother The dog and the colt went down to-day with our boy for me and the colt went before and then the horse and slay [sleigh] and dog—I went

to a party and I danced a great deal and was very happy—I read french stories—The colt plays very much—and follows the horse when it is out.

Your affectionate brother

JAMES R. LOWELL.

I forgot to tell you that sister mary has not given me any present but I have got three books

TO THE SAME Nov. 2, 1828.

My Dear Brother,—I am now going to tell you melancholy news. I have got the ague together with a gumbile. I presume you know that September has got a lame leg, but he grows better every day and now is very well but still limps a little. We have a new scholar from round hill. his name is Hooper and we expect another named Penn who I believe also comes from there. The boys are all very well except Nemaise, who has got another piece of glass in his leg and is waiting for the doctor to take it out, and Samuel Storrow is also sick. I am going to have a new suit of blue broadcloth clothes to wear every day and to play in. Mother tells me that I may have any sort of buttons I choose. I have not done anything to the hut but if you wish I will. I am now very happy; but I should be more so if you were there. I hope you will answer my letter if you do not I shall write you no more letters. when you write my letters you must direct them all to me and not write half to mother as generally do. Mother has given me the three volumes of tales of a grandfather.

farewell

Yours truly

JAMES R. LOWELL.

You must excuse me for making so many mistakes. You must keep what I have told you about my new clothes a secret if you dont I shall not divulge any more secrets to you. I have got quite a library. The Master has not taken his rattan out since the vacation. Your little kitten is as well and as playful as ever and I hope you are to for I am sure I love you as well as ever. Why is grass like a mouse you cant guess that he he he ho ho ho ha ha ha hum hum hum.

In 1834, when he was fifteen years old, Lowell entered Harvard College as a freshman. He was a shy youth, of genial disposition, of high spirits, of undeveloped tastes, but already feeling in himself the stir of powers of the nature of which he was still ignorant. He became popular among his classmates, and made friends with some of them, especially with one who afterwards rose to distinction in political life, the late Honorable George Bailey Loring. Outside of his own class he formed a warm friendship with Mr. William H. Shackford, three years his senior in college, and his letters to these two friends afford the best picture of his life in those days.

The College was very different then from the University of the present day. Its resources were narrow, its teachers and scholars comparatively few in number. The four classes from 1835 to 1838 counted up to but two hundred students in all. Among the professors were some men of eminence, as, for instance, Peirce in mathematics and Felton in Greek. Ticknor was still professor of belles-lettres when Lowell entered college, but Longfellow succeeded him in 1836. The president

was Josiah Quincy, whose high and vigorous nature impressed itself on the little community over which he ruled, and to whom Lowell has paid an admirable and worthy tribute of respect in his essay on "A Great Public Character."

Lowell enjoyed his college days. "Almost everybody," he says in the essay just referred to, "looks back regretfully to the days of some Consul Plancus. Never were eyes so bright, never had wine so much wit and good-fellowship in it, never were we ourselves so capable of the various great things we have never done. . . . This is especially true of college life, when we first assume the titles without the responsibilities of manhood, and the president of our year is apt to become our Plancus very early."

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Cambridge, Jan. 6, 1836.

Dearest Shack,— . . . As for myself, I have had a very happy "new year's day," as far at least as presents go. I have been presented with a book, which I rather think you have heard me speak of buying, namely, Hilliard & Gray's beautiful edition of Milton, very handsomely bound in calf or sheep, I don't know which, for there is a diversity of opinion in the family about it, some saying one and some another; father says it's calf, and as that is considered the handsomest, I of course agree with him. The *English* edition of Coleridge's works has also been given me by my "paternal relation." You see the editiomania has not left me yet. With some stray cash, I have purchased Butler and Beattie

also; these as well as Coleridge belong to the Aldine Edition of the British Poets. Did you ever read "Hudibras"? It always *was* and always *will be* a great favorite of mine, an inexhaustible source of mirth from beginning to end. Who but Butler would have thought of so apt and amusing a simile as this,

> "And now, like lobster boiled, the morn
> From black to red begins to turn"?

. . . I am reading the life of Milton, and find it very interesting; *his* first taste (as well as *Cowley's*) for poetry was formed by reading Spenser. I am glad to have such good examples, for Spenser was always my favorite poet. I like the metre of the "Faëry Queene"; Beattie's "Minstrel" is in the same. Apropos of poetry, I myself (you need not turn up your nose and grin)—yes, I myself have cultivated the Muses, and have translated one or two odes from Horace, *your* favorite Horace. I like Horace much, but prefer Virgil's Bucolics to his Odes, most of them. If you have your Horace by you, turn to the IX. Satire, 1st Book, and read it, and see if you don't like it (in an expurgated edition). . . . You advise me to attend to chemistry. I intend to; I always had a taste for it, as I have for everything experimental. Did you ever attend at all to the making of Latin poetry? I always wondered why they didn't teach it here. I think it ought to be attended to here as much as in Europe. I shall study it, and the first attempt I make shall be "Ad Patrem optimum"; the second, "Ad carissimum amicum Gulielmum Shackfordum." If I write anything I'll send it to you. When my poems are pub-

lished I'll send them to you. Does chemistry belong to your branch of instruction?* I like mineralogy as much as ever, but the snow covers the ground, so that I can collect none except from the mine. Hilliard & Gray are going to publish a beautiful edition of Shakespeare next month (price $14, 8 vols., royal 8vo), beautifully printed, which I intend to buy if I can afford it. I admire your seal, which, however, you unluckily forgot to make backwards. I got it off whole. Last term I made a few attempts at wood-cutting, and really succeeded about as well as, if not better than, "old Caxton." Without looking, except in the "booke of memorie," can you tell me who he was? I am quite an antiquary, the pursuit of black-letter is very congenial to my tastes. By-the-bye, Milton has excited my ambition to read all the Greek and Latin classics which he did. Your most affectionate friend,

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Feb. 1, 1836.

. . . The "deturs" have been given out, and I have got Akenside's Poems. They are the best "deturs" that have been given out this long while, they say; they are bound most beautifully (all alike) in yellow calf, and—what I consider very appropriate—have the College arms stamped on the covers, in gold. They have a new stamp for the inside also. It has the College arms, and underneath the old inscription, with this addition, "pro insigni in studiis diligentiâ." . . .

* Mr. Shackford was, at this time, an instructor at Exeter Academy, N. H.

TO G. B. LORING

Boston, 23 (?) Dec., 1836.

My dear Friend,— . . . Here I am, alone in Bob's room with a blazing fire, in an atmosphere of "poesy" and soft-coal smoke. Pope, Dante, a few of the older English poets, Byron, and last, not least, some of my own compositions, lie around me. Mark my modesty. I don't put myself in the same line with the rest, you see. . . . Been quite "grouty" all the vacation, "black as Erebus." Discovered two points of very striking resemblance between myself and Lord Byron; and if you will put me in mind of it, I will propound next term, or in some other letter, "Vanity, thy name is Lowell"! . . .

"Vo solcando un mar crudele,
Senza vele e senza sarte," . . .

as Metastasio says in Italian, and which, transmuted into the good old vernacular, may be expressed in the words of Shakespeare—I am embarked "on a sea of troubles.". . .

Believe me yours,

J. R. L.

TO HIS MOTHER

Cambridge, Jan. 28, 1837.

. . . I am engaged in several poetical effusions, one of which I have dedicated to you, who have always been the patron and encourager of my youthful muse. If you wish to see me as much as I do you, I shall be satisfied.*

* In the summer of 1837 Dr. and Mrs. Lowell went to Europe. Mrs. Lowell wrote from Paris, May 27, 1838: "Babie Jamie!

TO G. B. LORING

Cambridge, Elmwood, 1837.

Dear George, — . . . What think you of the epigram and "effusion" I sent you in my last? Trusting they proved acceptable, and premising that they serve to fill up a letter, I send you another little piece, which I wrote (as indeed you will perceive by reading) in literally a *moment* of leisure. It is addressed to our old horse-chestnut, whose protecting arms are thrown around the room in which I am sitting. It is the unhappy, but I trust not disconsolate, survivor of two, *one* of which stood at the other corner of the "family mansion," and expired last summer of a lingering, and (I should think from the groanings of its aged limbs in the blast) painful, disease.

OUR OLD HORSE-CHESTNUT TREE

1

Long hast thou waved thy giant pride,
Thou old horse-chestnut tree,
Around that room, whose casements wide
First brought the light to me.

2

And thou hast heard our merry shout
(My brother Bob and I),

your poetry was very pleasing to me, and I am glad to have a letter, but not to remind me of you, for you are seldom long out of my head. . . . Don't leave your whistling, which used to cheer me so much. I frequently listen to it here, tho' far from you." In later years, Lowell often recalled how, on his daily return from school, he used to whistle as he came near home, to announce his coming to his mother, who seldom failed to be sitting at her window to welcome him.

When 'neath thy shade we played about
In careless infancy.

3

Then, too, in boyhood's prouder* day,
Rocked on thy limbs to rest,
We've listened to the song-bird's lay,
Or watched him build his nest.

4

Thou still the same thy trunk dost rear,
Thy moss-clad boughs dost wave;
While *we* are changing every year,
And hasting to the grave.

If you can't read it, 'tis not much lost.

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Cambridge, Feb. 26, 1837.

My dear Shack,— . . . Since I wrote to you (not last) I was chosen into the Hasty Pudding Club. At the very first meeting I attended I was chosen secretary, which is considered the most honorable office in the club, as the records are kept in verse (*mind*, I do not say *poetry*). This first brought my rhyming powers into notice, and since that I have been chosen to deliver the next anniversary poem by a vote of twenty out of twenty-four. *En passant*, the honors seem to thicken around my exalted head lately, for I received a very respectful note from Mr. Amos Binney, to act as one of the marshals

* "Prouder" because, no longer in the trammels of petticoats, we "strutted superior" in a jacket and trousers.

at the ordination of Mr. Bartol, who is to be ordained colleague of the Rev. Charles Lowell, D.D. . . . on Wednesday next, 1st of March. Think of that!

I thought your brother Charles was studying law. I intend to study that myself, and probably shall be Chief Justice of the United States. . . .

Your very affectionate and true friend,

J. R. L.

TO G. B. LORING.

Cambridge, Wednesday, April 5, 1837.

Dear George,— . . . This day, the very first of the vacation (a word which rings merrily in the ears of many on account of the relief it brings from study)—on this day, I say, have I, erst the most incorrigible of time's fritterers, learned (or rather read, for it is very easy) twenty (!) pages in Cicero and eight chapters in Herodotus, and all this of my own accord, and it is not yet three o'clock.

Truly, as you say, "the leopard *has* changed his spots and the Ethiopian his skin"! I would not have believed it myself a year ago, but we grow wiser as we grow older, and not a day passes that does not add its share to our stock of wisdom and experience. For my own part I can say with Socrates, *γηράσκω δ' αἰεὶ πολλὰ διδασκόμενος*, or better by a little alteration, *ἠβάσκω*, etc.—if that may be a true Greek word, and I think it is.

Well, I suppose you are at home, "sweet, sweet home!" So am I, and it does my heart good. As I run about over the same familiar spots which I trod in joyous, careless

infancy, my heart leaps again, and the innocent days of my childhood come over me like a dream. "Oh, it sickens the heart" to be long from "home"; but it softens it, and even in the moss-grown trees we

"Meet at each step a friend's familiar face!"

* * * * *

"While long neglected, but at length caress'd,
His faithful dog salutes the welcome guest,
Points to the master's eyes (where'er they roam)
His wistful face, and whines a welcome home."

CAMPBELL.

"Mark yon old mansion frowning through the trees,
Whose hollow turret woos the whistling breeze.
That casement, arch'd with ivy's brownest shade,
First to these eyes the light of heaven convey'd!"

ROGERS.

Excuse my making such long quotations—but they are so much, so infinitely, superior to anything *I* could say, that they excuse themselves. Then, too,

"As through the garden's desert paths I rove,
What fond illusions swarm in every grove!
Childhood's loved group revisits every scene,
The tangled woodwalk and the tufted green!"

ROGERS.

How exactly do these descriptions suit with my present situation! "Old mansion," "desert walks," everything!

To revisit the home of one's childhood has much of joy, but it is a joy mingled with sadness. To think how soon those flowers that have bloomed, those fields that

have smiled, and those trees that have so often arrayed themselves "in summer's garb" for *you*, may bloom and smile and array themselves for another!

You may think me a fool to talk in such a moralizing strain, but, George, I have lately talked less and thought more. I mean to read next term, if possible, a chapter in my Bible every night. Indeed, I mean to this vacation. "Be wise *to-day*, 'tis madness to defer," and it is an old Spanish proverb, that "hell is paved with good intentions." *À propos*, I intend to satirize in my poem those *fools* that are ambitious of appearing to despise religion, etc. — *this*, I think, you would not blame as "personality." *En passant*, "impersonation" is called by Stuart and Whately one of the greatest of the poet's powers, and the most peculiar to him.

I am seated before a fireplace big enough to live in, with a good soft-coal fire in a standing grate, in a chair the fac-simile of the one at my room. Speaking of the chair at my room puts me in mind of —— again, and he puts me in mind of a line in the "Bard of Avon," or "Swan of Avon," *ut placeat*,

> "A goodly apple, rotten at the core";

and filling out the couplet by a line of my own (though it be presumption to add to Shakespeare), it would read thus,

> "A goodly apple, rotten at the core,"
> A handsome fellow, but a deuced bore!

'Tis pity his *penetrating* qualities were not as great in one sense as they are in the other. Truly, as Cicero

says of Q. Fabius Maximus (Cunctator), who can tell, "quae scientia juris *augurii*," belongs to ——! . . .

Your most affectionate friend,

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, I don't know the date.
[April 10, 1837.]

Dear George,— . . . I have written about an hundred lines of my *poem* (?), and I suspect it is going to be a pretty good one. *At least*, some parts of it will *take*. 'Tis a pretty good subject, but I find it enlarging as I progress. "Crescit eundo," like the balls of snow we used to roll when we were boys. By the way, that's not a bad simile. I might alter it into an avalanche and bring it into the poem, in which I intend to say how much beyond me the subject is. . . .

I am as busy as a bee—almost. I study and read and write all the time.

I have laid my hands on a very pretty edition of Cowper, which I intend to keep. In two volumes.

I have also "pinned" some letters relating to myself in my early childhood, by which it seems I was a miracle of a boy for sweetness of temper. "Credite posteri"! I believe I *was*, although perhaps you would not think it *now*.

George, you are in a very dangerous situation. Surrounded as you are by temptations, with Miss K—— your next-door neighbor, and the eyes of Miss H—— blazing across but a small meadow, you cannot be too careful of yourself. You may trust my advice, for, in

common with Petrarch, Dante, Tasso, and Byron, I was desperately in love before I was ten years old. What pangs I have suffered my own heart, perhaps, only knows. . . .

Your most affectionate friend,

LOWELL.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, April 14, 1837.

. . . You can't imagine how delightful it is out here. The greatest multitude of birds of every description that I ever recollect to have seen. The grass is fast growing green under the kind sun of spring—that is, in southerly aspects. Every day that the sun shines I take my book and go out to a bank in our garden, and lie and read. 'Tis almost as pleasant as

"To sit on rocks, to muse o'er flood and fell."

This afternoon I read through Beattie's "Minstrel," which I never read carefully before. It does not seem to me in most parts to possess fire enough—you can't see the "kindling touch" of genius in it. I like the poetry that sends a sort of a cold thrill through one (not an unpleasant one), and brings tears into one's eyes. Such to me are some parts of Byron and Campbell. . . .

The gooseberry bushes are beginning to leaf out. Though this is not the season to admire the

"Pomp of woods, and garniture of fields,"

yet I think 'tis one of the most delightful seasons of the year. The birds now sing loudest, and the fowling-

piece breaks "the quiet of the scene" less often than at any other time. Besides, 'tis beautiful to watch the different steps of Nature's toilet as she arrays herself in the flowery dress of spring. It almost seems as if one could see the grass grow green. Then, too, the sky is so clear!

I keep my journal *almost* as diligently as you can yours. But I have less time for it than you. However, we shall both have *something* to read when we meet again, when you come back to this "infernal hole," as you politely style it. To me 'tis not an "infernal hole," I can tell you. It is my birthplace, the "home of my childhood," and to me its fields are full as green and its woods as sombre as any in "less privileged earth." Show me a place so sweet as that most delightful of spots, "sweet Auburn"! Match me Fresh Pond! Your great fish-kettle is nothing to it! Show me any elms like the Cambridge ones! why, they're celebrated! their "fama volat, crescitque eundo."

I have been reading "The Doctor," among other things, lately. 'Tis a capital book for a man to read who wishes to obtain a superficial knowledge of a great many subjects at an easy rate. No, I don't mean to say, "to obtain," but to show off an apparent knowledge. I don't mean to say that the subjects treated of are touched on superficially, except in as much as is necessary from the nature of the work. . . .

TO W. H. SHACKFORD

Elmwood, Cambridge, July 22, 1837.

My dear Shack,— . . . My poem went off very well indeed, and, I hear, was very generally satisfactory.

President Quincy said afterwards to one of my class that the performances were "highly creditable."

I have been chosen, with others, to preside over the destinies of *Harvardiana** during the ensuing year. This was somewhat flattering to my vanity considering that I'm one of the youngest in my class. . . .

. . . Shack, pity me! I am in love—and have been so for some time, hopelessly in love. Perhaps you know how to pity me. . . .

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Boston, Aug. 14, 1837.

My dear Friend,— . . . I have just returned from an excursion into the country, where I have been engaged shooting and fishing and going through the usual routine of country amusements. But I am glad to get home again. . . .

. . . To-day it is clearing up, and we shall have a specimen of our pleasant weather, which is as delightful as any in the world—as Whittier says (and I shall always like him the better for "sticking up" for *old New* England),

"My own green land forever!"

Yankee-land, after all, is no place to be sneezed at, especially when 'tis one's birthplace. Hath not Montgomery said,

"There is a land of ev'ry land the pride,
Beloved of Heaven o'er all the earth beside"?

* The college magazine of that date.

and something else too, which I can't recall, about a spot in that land? And what are they—that land and that spot?

"That land thy country, and that spot thy home!"

Shack, how well I remember the first time I ever saw you "to speak to." You were a haughty (not by nature, but rank) Senior, I an humble Freshman, too proud to wear a jacket and afraid to wear a coat! You spoke to me kindly—how astonished I was! In my bashfulness I had always considered the Seniors as a superior race. But now I saw that, like Southey's "Ereenia," they could stoop to love a mortal. You were the first Senior I ever visited, and, if you recollect, it was no easy task to induce me to visit you, and then I did it stealthily "Eheu! jam satis!" methinks I hear you exclaim, but they are (those days of Freshmanic innocence)

"A something glittering in the sun
For mem'ry to look back upon!" . . .

TO G. B. LORING

Elmwood, Cambridge,
Wednesday, Aug. 23, 1837.

I

I tak' my pen in hand, dear Lorin,'
To write—tho' I'm afraid o' borin'
A chiel wha a' his time is porin'
Owre* grave design,
Wi' gems his mem'ry's pockets storin'
Frae learning's mine.

* "Owre"—O'er.

2

Yet, as I ane day hope to climb
Thro' some sma' chink to realms o' rhyme,
I trust ye winna think't a crime
If I scrawl verse,
But say I might hae wasted time
In writin' worse.*

3

Besides, I'm readin' Burns the poet,
And, as I wish'd to let you know it,
I thought the brawest gate to show it
An' mak' ye smile,
Wad be (tho' far I fa' below it)
To try his style.

4

Having set Pegasus agoin',
Wi' weel-nibb'd pen, and ink aflowin'
While yet my rhymin'-fit is growin',
Ise† stick it out,
An' let ye ken in stanzas glowin'
What I'm about.

5

At present, then, your friend's reposin'
Upon a couch, his een half-closin.'
Sma', common minds wad think him dozin'
Or aiblins fou,‡
While a' the time he's fast composin'
These lines to you.

* Quaere. "In writin' werse," as Sam Veller says (?) thus—"I might hae wasted time In writn' werse"—scil. verse.
† "Ise"—I will—I'll.
‡ "Aiblins"—Anglice, perhaps. "Fou"—corned.

6

You *must* excuse this ramblin' letter;
Upon my word I canna better,
For luve to thought's an awfu' fetter
As e'er was seen,
An' 'twas but late yestreen I met her
And—ah! those een!

7

Those liquid een o' winsome blue
(Like sparklin' draps o' heav'n's ain dew),
Those modest cheeks o' changin' hue,
Are aye before me;
Where'er I turn they meet my view
An' hover owre me!

8

To think o' her an' naething but her
Puts my puir heart in sic a flutter
That, troth! at last I canna utter
Ae* thing aright,
An' aften scarce escape the gutter
In braid daylight!

9

Fu' aft I've talk'd o' laughin' girls
An' sparklin' een and auburn curls
An' smiles disclosin' rows o' pearls,
Wi' mickle glee—
But she, alas! my heartstrings dirls†
In spite o' me!

* "Ae"—One, in contradistinction to "Ane," which is used as in "Any one," "One says," etc.
† "Dirls"—causes to flutter.

10

Na, ne'er till now I've felt the sway
Of een that mock pure Hesper's ray,
An' voice as sweet as when in May
The playfu' breeze
Sighs aft as if it fain wad stay
Amid the trees.

11

10 o'clock P.M.

Geordie, while I was up here writin',
This letter dull to you inditin'
(Duty with Inclination fightin'
To keep me to it),
For rhymes my harmless goosequill bitin,'
I never knew it!

12

"Knew *what?*" you cry, "as I'm a sinner
You know perhaps—I'm sure I dinna!"
Why, Geordie, as I hope to win her,
While I sat here
She had come down to stay to dinner!
Wasna *that* queer?*

13

How ilka word o' hers I drank
(*You* will not blame me if I'm frank)!
How ilka slightest movement sank
Deep in my breast!
Methought this earth were a' a blank,
By her unblest.

* Now she is gone my spirits, alas! have fled with her, as you may see by the dulness of my versification.

14

Oh! had I but *ae* lock o' hair
That now sae fondly nestles there,
Just peepin' out (her smiles to share)
Frae 'neath her bonnet,
For a' life's ills I wadna care
While gazin' on it!

15

The fact is, Geordie, I'm a fule,
Tho' nat accordin' t'ony rule
(As 'tis wi' some) drumm'd in at schule
By dint o' thrashin',
But worse—I'm Cupid's veriest tool,
The slave o' passion.

16

Yet, walkin' wi' her for a mile,
Hearin' her words, winnin' her smile,
Feelin' the force o' young luve's wile
In ilka dimple—
Is quite eneugh the sense to rile
O' wise or simple.

17

Dear frien', I charge ye ance for all
Keep out o' sight this silly scrawl,
Or may auld Clootie* on ye fall
Wi' awfu' scratches,
An' roast ye in infernal hall
Wi' brunstane matches!

* "Auld Clootie"—the Deil—Old Nick.

18

May wee imps haunt your restless sleep,
An' when frae 'neath the claithes ye peep,
Wi' grinning face upon ye leap,
An' sair torment ye,
Because ye didna secret keep
The rhymes I sent ye.

19

Or, warse than a', may certain lasses
Cut faithless Geordie as he passes,
An' sternly eye wi' quizzin'-glasses
The luckless swain,
An' smilin' walk wi' stupid asses
To gie him pain!

Dear Geordie I end—I trust you are well,
And send the best wishes of
Yours, J. R. L.

Lowell did not find the regular discipline and required studies of the college course suited to his taste. Other interests were more to him than those of the recitation-room. Required by the system of instruction which then prevailed to pursue certain studies for which he had no bent, with excusable boyish folly he asserted his independence by neglecting the set lesson, often substituting for it something of more worth intrinsically and for himself. But this negligence, persisted in, in spite of the remonstrance of friends, brought him finally under college discipline, and in the early summer of 1838 he was suspended for a period of several months, and was sent to Concord to carry

on his studies under the charge of the minister of the town.

The self-reproach for the pain inflicted on his parents by his conduct, and the recognition of his own self-indulgence, were not embittered by the sense of any serious moral delinquency. The seclusion and tranquillity of Concord gave him opportunity for reflection.

He found Concord dull. "It appears a pretty decent sort of place," he wrote, "but I've no patience with it. I'm homesick and all that sort of thing." He was not yet prepared to know Emerson, who might have helped him; but he had been bred in an atmosphere of conservatism in matters of the intellect and the spirit, and he shared in the then common aversion to Emerson's teaching.

In one of his letters he says: "I feel like a fool. I must go down and see Emerson, and if he doesn't make me feel more like one, it won't be for want of sympathy. He is a good-natured man in spite of his doctrines."

Of another Concord celebrity he wrote: "I met Thoreau last night, and it is exquisitely amusing to see how he imitates Emerson's tone and manner. With my eyes shut, I shouldn't know them apart."

TO G. B. LORING

Concord(ia discors), July 8, 1838.

. . . Everybody almost is calling me "indolent," "blind dependent on my own powers" and "on fate." Damn everybody! since everybody damns me. Everybody seems to see but one side of my character, and that the

worst. As for my dependence on my own powers, 'tis all fudge. As for fate, I believe that in every man's breast are the stars of his fortune, which, if he choose, he may rule as easily as does the child the mimic constellations in the orrery he plays with. I acknowledge, too, that I have been something of a dreamer, and have sacrificed, perchance, too assiduously on that altar to the "unknown God," which the Divinity has builded not with hands in the bosom of every decent man, sometimes blazing out clear with flame, like Abel's sacrifice, heaven-seeking; sometimes smothered with greenwood and earthward, like that of Cain. Lazy quotha! I haven't dug, 'tis true, but I have done as well, and "since my free soul was mistress of her choice, and could of *books* distinguish her election," I have chosen what reading I pleased and what friends I pleased, sometimes scholars and sometimes not. I don't care that my companions should be able to calculate the sine and cosine of every step they take to serve a friend—not I. True,

> "I have dreamed uncounted hours
> The visions that arise without a sleep,"

careless if the wise did shake their divine heads (or divining) and say,

> "Of such materials wretched men are made."

And up here at this infernal Concord I shall continue to, for I am lonely, and must live in the past and future. 'Tis true,

> "I deserved to feel wretched and lonely,"

but that makes no differ; besides, Divine Will says or sings that man is a two-legged creature that looks before and behind, and Divine Will is a better judge of character than I. These moonlight nights I spend mostly in walking, and I don't know a prettier scene than the two bridges and the hills by the river side. One longs to jump in, like Pewit in the German popular tales, and go to Elfland after the sheep which so excited the envy of his neighbors. How wags the world down in Cambridge? It'll be a long while before I walk the "banks of Cam," or take shelter from the sun *inter silvas Academiæ*. "Inter silvas academiæ *quaerere* verum!" True, 'tis mostly seeking, for few ever find it. Poor Truth dodges about among the trees and tries not to be caught. How many fools, like stout old Sir Walter Rawley, go hunting after an intellectual El Dorado, and bring home naught but yellow (sand) gold-seeming dust! I've almost a mind to turn idealist, and believe with Emerson that "this world is all a fleeting show, for man's delusion given." . . .

TO THE SAME

"Concord(ia Discors"), July 12, 1838.

. . . Many a man goes about this goodly world (for it is a *damned* goodly one) whose inner garment of intellect might have blushed beside the worst of the two shirts in Falstaff's regiment; yet he conceals it deftly by buttoning himself up tightly, yea, almost impenetrably, in a good, stout, borrowed overcoat of other men's ideas! Or, to make a more poetical illustration, many a man looks wise by reflecting the wisdom of another, even as

a stream, shallow in itself, seems, by reflecting a cloud, as deep as the cloud is high.

TO THE SAME

Aug. 9, 1838.

I have been reading the first volume of Carlyle's "Miscellanies" [then recently published]. One article, that on Burns, is worth all the rest to me. I like, too, the one on German Playwrights. There are fine passages in all.

One of Lowell's occupations during his stay at Concord was the writing of his "Class Poem"—the poem to be read on Class Day, the closing day of college life. His suspension extended over the day itself, so that he was not allowed to read the poem to his classmates, but it was printed for their use, and the little pamphlet, his first independently printed production, has become one of the desiderata of bibliomaniacs. As a poem it is perhaps above the general level of such performances; but though it gives evidence of literary talent, it shows that its writer was untouched by the new intellectual spirit, of which Emerson's was the clearest voice, as well as by the ferment in the conscience of New England, manifest chiefly in the self-sacrificing zeal of Garrison and the Abolitionists. Lowell was not yet among the "Transcendentalists." In the autumn, having received his bachelor's degree with his classmates, he returned to his home in Cambridge.

TO G. B. LORING

Elmwood, Sept. 22, 1838.

. . . No man ought to be a minister who has not a

special calling that way. I don't mean an old-fashioned special calling, with winged angels and fat-bottomed cherubs, but an inward one. In fact, I think that no man ought to be a minister who has not money enough to support him besides his salary. For the minister of God should not be thinking of his own and children's bread when dispensing the bread of life. I have been led to reflect seriously on the subject since I have thought of going into the Divinity School. Some men were made for peacemakers and others for shoemakers, and if each man follow his nose we shall all come out right at last. If I did not think that I should some day make a great fool of myself and marry (not that I would call *all* men fools who marry), I would enter the School to-morrow. Certain am I that it is not pleasant to work for a living anyway, but "we youth" must live, and verily this "money" is a very good thing, though on that account we need not fall down and worship it. The very cent on which my eye now rests may have done a great deal of good in its day: perhaps it has made glad the heart of the widow, and put a morsel of bread in the famishing mouths of her children; and perhaps it has created much misery: perhaps some now determined gambler began his career of sin by playing chuck-farthing with that very piece of stamped copper, etc. . . .

Alas! I don't feel as if I ought to have any time now "vacare Musis." And yet I hardly like to bid the "swate deludering cratures" farewell. A plan has been running in my head for some time, of writing a sort of dramatic poem on the subject of Cromwell. Those old

Roundheads have never had justice done them. They have only been held up as canting, psalm-singing, hypocritical rascals; as a sort of a foil for the open-hearted Cavalier. But it were a strange thing indeed if there were not somewhat in such men as Milton, Sidney, Hampden, Selden, and Pym. It always struck me that there was more true poetry in those old fiery-eyed, buff-belted warriors, with their deep, holy enthusiasm for liberty and democracy, political and religious; with their glorious trust in the arm of the Lord in battle—than in the dashing, ranting Cavaliers, who wished to restore their king that they might give vent to their passions, and go to sleep again in the laps of their mistresses, deaf to the cries of the poor and the oppressed. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Oct. 11, 1838.

I am reading Blackstone with as good a grace and as few wry faces as I may.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Oct., 1838.

. . . A very great change has come o'er the spirit of my dream of life. I have renounced the law. I am going to settle down into a business man at last, after all I have said to the contrary. Farewell, a long farewell to all my greatness! I find that I cannot bring myself to like the law, and I am now looking out for a place "in a store." You may imagine that all this has not come to pass without a great struggle. I must expect to give up almost entirely all literary pursuits, and in-

stead of making rhymes devote myself to making money. If I thought it possible that I ever could love the law (one can't make a lawyer without it) I wouldn't hesitate a moment, but I am confident that I shall never be able even to be on speaking terms with it.

I have been thinking seriously of the ministry, but then—I have also thought of medicine, but then—still worse! . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Nov. 8, 1838.

. . . On Monday last I went into town to look out for a place, and was induced *en passant* to step into the United States Court, where there was a case pending, in which Webster was one of the counsel retained. I had not been there an hour before I determined to continue in my profession and study as well as I could.

Nov. 15.

. . . The elections in our town have been going on for the last three days, resulting in no choice; so that the goodly, venerable, and literary town of Cambridge is very likely to go unrepresented in the next session of the General Court. I shall vote as soon as I come of age, which will be by the next election but one. I shouldn't wonder if the peaceable young gentleman whom you knew in college flared up into a great political luminary. I am fast becoming ultra-democratic, and when I come up to see you, which I trust will be very soon, I intend to inoculate you with the (I won't call it by the technical term of "virus," because that's too hard a word, but with the) principle. I live in confident ex-

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pectation of seeing that time when the people of England shall wake up and heave that vast incubus, which has full long oppressed religion, the Established Church, from their breast. Their slumber is already growing fitful and uneasy, and when they wake—"woe, woe to the riders that trample them down!" Liberty is now no longer a cant word in the mouths of knaves and fools; too long have poets sung and heroes bled, too long have poor, paltry *ignes fatui* decoyed enthusiasts into quagmires.

By the very last accounts from England, immense meetings had been held in all parts of England to petition Parliament for an equal representation. At Manchester Ebenezer Elliott, of whom you must have heard, a man of true genius, "the poor man's poet," was chairman of a meeting where three hundred thousand were said to have been present! When such a meeting was held there once before they were fired upon by the troops, but now they were afraid to send the soldiers among the people for fear of desertion. Mark that. *There* is a great and pregnant change ominous of much. It almost brings tears into my eyes when I think of this vast multitude starved, trampled upon, meeting to *petition* the government which oppressed them, and which *they* supported by taxes wrung out of the very children's life-blood. Verily, some enthusiasts have even ventured to assert that there are hearts, aye, even warm ones, under frieze jerkins! Gude sain us! what shall we come to when men venture to depart so much from the creed of their fathers? Seriously, I think that if we live the life allotted to mortals we shall see the throbs of that

heart, and see perhaps that it has good red blood like "our own"!

My dear George, there is no cant in all this, nor do I think you will suspect me of it, for I feel it all, and there is a hidden virtue in truth which recommends itself everywhere. As for the two great parties which divide this country, I for one dare to say that democracy does belong to neither of them, and certainly to neither exclusively—so I care not which whips. The Van Burenites have the stoutest lungs and shout loudly of "Jeffersonian democracy," but fair and softly wins the race. A third party, or rather no party, are secretly rising up in this country, whose voice will soon be heard. The Abolitionists are the only ones with whom I sympathize of the present extant parties. I've only written two verses of rhyme since I saw you. . . .

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 7, 1839.

. . . I sometimes think that I have it in me, and shall one day do somewhat; meantime I am schooling myself and shaping my theory of poesy. I will read you when we meet (I hope soon) a fragmentary essay on poetry which I read at an A.Δ.Φ. meeting. It has some good things in it. I know, George, you won't take any such speeches as that last for vanity or foolishness, but as it was meant, an outpouring of my thoughts to a friendly bosom. You know me too well to think that my harmless vanity ("for who would trample at my side A few

pale buds, my garden's pride?") is too deeply ingrained to be ever eradicated. I even am vain enough to think that I have improved since we saw each other. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Feb. 27, 1839.

. . . I have written a great deal of *pottery* lately, but as I am at "the office" I can only give you such scraps as I remember. If you ever see the *Post*, there is a Yankee song of mine in it this morning, beginning, "Ye Yankees of the Baystate." I will give you enough in my next. I have finished "The Dying Year," and it is pretty fair. . . .

I have quitted the law forever. So much for it. About lecturing in Andover. Do they pay anything? Would they like such an abstract lecture as I should give them? What time should you want me? I go to Concord on the first Wednesday in March—a week from next Wednesday. I hope to astonish them a little. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Friday morning, March 9, 1839.

. . . The more I think of business the more really unhappy do I feel, and think more and more of studying law. In your letter you speak of my lecturing in Andover, about which I forgot to speak to you. Do they pay expenses? They gave me four dollars in Concord. I wish they'd take it into their heads to ask me at Cambridge, where they pay fifteen dollars, or in Lowell, where they pay twenty-five dollars!! What to do with myself I don't know. I'm afraid people will think

me a fool if I change again, and yet I can hardly hope ever to be satisfied where I am. I shouldn't wonder if next Monday saw me with "Kent's Commentaries" under my arm. I think I might get to take an interest in it, and then I should not fear at all about the living. . . .

I am certainly just at present in a miserable state, and I won't live so long.

TO THE SAME

Counting-Room, Boston, April 29, 1839.

. . . I don't know how it is, but I sometimes actually *need* to write somewhat in verse. . . .

On Sunday, my work-day in the *pottery* business, I scratched off a piece of rhyme on Allston's picture of Miriam and sent it to the *Advertiser*, in which, if it does not appear, it will be lost to the world, for part of it was only written on the sheet I sent, and the part that was written in pencil has lighted my lamp or cigar long since. It was scarcely half an hour's work, and therefore is rather an undecided [sort] of a production—written too fast to be either very bad or very good. There's some philosophy in that last remark. The piece on "Old Age" I think you will like. I am vain enough to suppose that, after the retouching I shall give it to-night, you can't help it. I trust I shall gradually get over the fault which belongs to all young writers, and which I should [describe] as having too many *thoughts* and too little *thought*. If a man builds his house on a rock it will stand; but if on a heap of little stones, mortar will hardly hold it up. . . . When will you come down to

visit the Allston Exhibition? If you are inclined to be critical in such matters, you must go alone. I can't stand it. Genius is to be admired and not criticised, and paintings must not (as is generally the case) be compared to our own conception, but with other paintings. What painter (excepting perhaps Raffaelle) ever came near his own conception or that of any other man?

TO THE SAME

Boston, May 9, 1839.

. . . The "Threnodia" has made its appearance in the *Knickerbocker*, and I shall, *ergo*, send on another piece or two shortly and solicit pay for the same. The "Threnodia" "is considered" the best piece in the number. I rather think that my brother Robert thought I wrote it, for when I was sitting in his room last night and he had been running down the pieces, he said that the Thren. was very "pretty," using a word which he thought would make my auctorial feelings roll me up into a literary hedgehog, or, in other words, raise my dander. But I coolly turned to the index, read every piece till I got to that, and then read off the page and turned to it very coolly as if I had never heard of it before, and put him off the scent. . . . R. animadverted on the irregular metre of the T., but, as I think, very unphilosophically and without much perception of the *true* rules of poetry. In my opinion no verse ought to be longer than the writer can sensibly make it. It has been this senseless stretching of verses to make them octo- or deka-syllabic or what not, that has brought such an abundance of useless epithets on the shoulders of poor English

verse. Methinks I see poor Poesy now with an epithet on either shoulder (like Robinson Crusoe's cats), cramming her fingers into her ears to shut out their prolonged caterwaul. Look at this, for instance,

> "And let thy *gentle* fingers fling
> Its *melting* murmurs o'er my ear."

That is not a very good instance either; I can't recall any just now, though, as I walked out of town yesterday, a great many came to my mind. I have not written a line since I wrote last to you, nor do I seem to have any call that way at present. I have many unfinished pieces which I must finish when I am in the mood. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, May 10, 1839.

I was agreeably surprised by the receipt of your letter this morning. I approve highly of your homily, and shall not [get] myself into such a scrape as poor Gil Blas did by attempting to criticise it. . . . The dew, mine ancient mentor, falleth not in the aisle of the temple made with hands, but visiteth every little green-clad blue-eyed worshipper on the hill-side or in the green-wood. Hath not Holy Writ taught us how that Enoch "walked with God"? And who are they that in our day walk in this holy wise? I fear me that those who walk unto the earthly temple walk with vanity, ostentation, and sinful lust oftentimes rather than with God.

> What is religion? 'Tis to go
> To church one day in seven,
> And think that *we*, of all men, know
> The only way to heaven.

But he that hath found, as the holy apostle did at Athens of the heathens, an altar to the unknown God in his heart, and who in a spirit of love and wonder offereth up acceptable offerings thereupon in the Temple of Nature, doth not he, of the twain, walk with God?

> "To him
> The morning stars are vocal as of old,
> And sing each day the birthday of a world,
> A world of love and beauty. Yea, old ocean
> Doth find a voice, and forests sing aloud."

In that fine old poet Herbert are as good arguments—the more pleasing for their quaintness—for church-going as are to be found anywhere. I remember one line of his which will be a good specimen. He says that even when you hear a dull preacher we should not go away uninstructed, for then

> "God takes a text and preaches patience."

I went last night to a concert given by the Brigade Band, and really heard some very fine music. They sometimes made a little too much noise for my taste, which is most decidedly for that sort of

> "Music that gentlier on the spirit lies
> Than tired eyelids over tired eyes"—

as Tennyson says, more beautifully than any poet I am acquainted with.

At Allston's gallery yesterday I saw something that drove me almost crazy with delight. You know how beauty always affects me. Well, yesterday I saw the most beautiful creature I ever set these eyes upon.

'Twere vain to attempt to describe her, and yet I must give you some faint idea of what sort of a creature she was. Her features were perfectly Jewish. Dark complexion, but one of those clear faces where every shade of feeling floats across like the shadow of a cloud across the grass. Eyes the largest and blackest and brightest and most spirit-like I ever dreamed of. Such eyes! They almost made me tremble. Across the room the outline of her eye was entirely merged in the shadows of her brows and the darkness of her complexion, so that you only saw a glory undefined and mysterious. Don't dream that I am in love with her, for I am "to one thing constant ever"—and I should never think of aught but distantly adoring such a seraphic loveliness. Perhaps from her darkness I should call her better a fallen seraph—in whose face was not darkness but "excess of glory obscured," as Milton beautifully says. She gave me more poetry than everything I have seen or thought this year. I must make her acquaintance, so that I may look into those two eyes. She is Southern, and is educating at Mr. Emerson's school to be a school-mistress. I doubt if she remains so long.

If I were to bless your vines, what think you would my slips of wild grape-vine say that I planted about a week ago? I should hear all around, "Bless me, even me also, O my father!" What a passage in the Bible that is! I never could and never can read it without tears in my eyes. Esau was the favorite to my boyish mind, and is still. I had a fellow-feeling with him, for he was a careless, scatter-brained, uncalculating sort

of a fellow, in which respect some others are born into the world like him.

Your affectionate friend and jackass,

HUGH PERCEVAL.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 20, 1839.

Rejoice with me, for to-morrow I shall be free. Without saying a word to any one, I shall quietly proceed to Dane Law College to recitation. Now shall I be happy again as far as *that* is concerned.

. . . I am lazy enough and dilatory enough, Heaven knows, but not half so much so as some of my friends suppose. At all events, I was never made for a merchant, and I even begin to doubt whether I was made for anything in particular but to loiter through life. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 4, 1839.

. . . I begin to like the law. And therefore it is quite interesting. I am determined that I *will* like it and therefore I *do*. I don't know how to fill up this letter, and therefore will copy you a few thoughts which I threw into verse some time since, for of late I have had no call to write anything.

I

Must Love and Peace forever dwell apart,
Holding no friendly converse in *one* heart?
As two sweet notes that sound on different keys
Discord together, so, alas! do these.

2

TIME AN HUSBANDMAN

Strive not to hide the wrinkles on thy face.
They should but add to thee more reverend grace;
For noble fruits should follow where the plough
Of time has dug its furrows on thy brow.

3

Do all in place, and all is then aright.
Stars shun the day, but beautify the night.

4

CONSISTENCY

He is a fool who would thy faith deride
If youth's opinions change before life's close.
Doth not thy shade fall on a different side
When the sun sets than when his light first rose?

5

MIND'S PARADOX

If that in trifles I take much delight
Thou blamest me, thou doest not aright.
Who deemeth small things are beneath his state,
Will be too small for what is truly great.

6

The greatest truths may not be wholly true.
Who would have sunshine must have shadow too.

7

Look not on all unsteadiness with fear,
Nor idly wait till all things be made clear.
Stars twinkle from the grossness of thine atmosphere.

8

Strive not for fame, but wait beneath the tree,
And goodly fruitage will drop down to thee.
Who shakes the bough to get it on the hour,
Gets unripe fruit that turns his stomach sour.

9

On the *first* cause thy mind's eyes steadfast keep.
Reflected stars make shallow'st pools seem deep.

10

Error is not forever; hope for right.
Darkness is not the opposite of light,
But only absence—day will follow night.

11

OPINION

If thy bark groundeth with the ebbing tide,
Wait patiently the turning minds of men;
Opinion's wave full soon shall flow again,
And proudly on its waters thou shalt ride.

12

Two north-lights are there in the Soul that beam,
Truth's steady ray and Fancy's waving gleam.
One shines by day, the other blesseth night.
Scorn neither; though diverse, yet both are light.

TO THE SAME

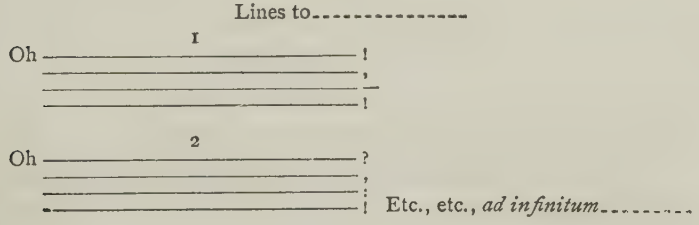
Elmwood, June 28, 1839.

. . . I found quite a treasure to-day—a small volume of about five hundred pages; not one of your attenuated modern things that seem like milk and water *watered*, but a goodly fat little fellow and full of the choicest

dainties, viz., Hesiod, Theocritus, Bion, Moschus, and extracts from Orpheus and some forty others, all with a Latin translation *ad verbum*. There is some pleasure in reading such poets. How I do hate the modern cant about poetry and poets! Here is ———, "creep-mouse ———," who will tell me that some nonsensical songs of Goethe's must be loved, because they set forth a feeling of his heart. As if a man should say, "Here's a beautiful little piece, one which must strike a 'responsive chord in every man's breast'," or some such silly cant as is in vogue nowadays, and then read some such song as this:

I am happy, fiddlededee!
The happiest man you ever did see!
There's no one can so happy be!
Fiddlededido, fiddlededee!

I am sure that, for my single self, I always am a fool when I am happy, and, if I said anything, should say sillier things than the above song. If men had no other way of showing their happiness than by printing it—as grasshoppers and crickets can only do it by chirping—it would be all very well. I am sure it would be much better if all our songs of joy were printed thus, and I have long thought so, viz.,



I am very sorry for the fate of the piece I sent to the *Knickerbocker*, for I have no other full copy of it and it was really worth saving. If I could get any bookseller to do it for me, I would publish a volume of poems. Of late a fancy has seized me for so doing. If it met with any commendation I could get paid for contributions to periodicals. I tried last night to write a little rhyme—but must wait for the moving of the waters. The nine goddess virgins who dance with tender feet round the violet-hued fountain of Hippocrene, and whose immortal voices drop sweetly from their lips, will not come to me. . . .

Now I must stop and hear my pupil recite.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, July 22, 1839.

. . . If I live, I don't believe I shall ever (*between you and me*) practise law. I intend, however, to study it and prepare myself for practising. But a blind presentiment of becoming independent in some other way is always hovering round me. Above all things should I love to be able to sit down and do something literary for the rest of my natural life. If I don't marry—and I hardly think I shall—it will take but little to support me, and when I wanted a decent dinner I could go to one of my opulent friends—Dr. Loring, or some other. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Aug. 4, 1839.

. . . Since I talked with you when you were here I have wondered whether you believed in the divine in-

spiration of the old Hebrew prophets. Do you? I don't. I once thought it an argument in their favor that, in all the world, there has not, before or since, been any writing that compared with theirs in *poetic* sublimity. Now that I am older, this very thing seems to me against them. I think that if you compare it with that of our Saviour (whose inspiration I would be more willing to admit), you will perceive my meaning. *His*, you will notice, is prose; *theirs* poetic sublimity—and herein lies the difference between *inspiration*, or *perception* of *real* truth, and *enthusiasm*, or *longing after ideal truth.*

* * * * *

George, before I die your heart shall be gladdened by seeing your wayward, vain, and too often selfish friend do something that shall make his name honored. As Sheridan once said, "It's *in* me, and" (we'll skip the oath) "it shall come *out!*"

TO C. U. SKATES

Cambridge, Sept., 1839.

My dear Charles,—I am glad to see a more punctual answer to my last epistle than has heretofore been your wont. I sit down to answer your last with Time's warning finger pointing nigh upon the dead waste and middle of the night. Business first. Do you suppose that a package put on board the Charleston packet and directed to you as usual would come to hand? For if I happen to have some cash anywhere within a reasonable time, I intend to cheer your exile by sending you the third and fourth volumes of Carlyle's "Miscellanies," which have been published here.

I should love to be with you listening to the melancholy voice of your friends (remember me to them) the breakers. Here I have no such company. But the wind that comes from the sea has not forgotten their voices, and sings fine songs for me through the branches of the pine-grove under my window.

I begin to like the law; but I shall let my fate be governed by circumstance and influence. There are those who would have a man *act out himself;* it is very much a dispute about words. For is not this acting out ourselves, a man giving its due weight to every influence? A man should not only regard what is *in* him, but also what is *without* acting on that within. Evermore are these little circumstances busily at work building up their tiny coral stems in the heaving ocean of time, round which the ever-floating driftwood of opinion shall cling, till, in the next cycle, they become green islands, the abode of men like ourselves. Oh, for an hour's talk and smoke with you! I have so much to say that would stare at you cold and meaningless from paper. But smoking is not what it once was. Weep with me, friend of my bosom, on the degeneracy of cigars! Man and cigars decline together. Synopsis as follows: Chap. 1st. General view, with an attempt to trace the fate of man to some connection with the subject—probability of success from the fact that all inquiries into the matter end in smoke. Chap. 2d shows that as cigars grow to draw less easily, so it is with men who grow restive in drawing the Car of State; hence we may account for the French Revolution. Chap. 3d. The filling of cigars now belies the wrapper. So with men: they have a very well

seeming outside of learning or ideas, but are not so well filled as of yore; if we look deep we will find but cabbage leaves, etc., etc.

Your letters and crabbed characters bring back many thronging recollections to me. Do you remember that night, most of which we spent in the burying-ground striving to raise ghosts? Truly, life were undesirable if we had not the power of looking behind as well as before us—and Pluto imposed hard conditions on Orpheus in that he forbade him to do so. Mournfully as [echoed] the *far-heard* backward footsteps of Eurydice, do those of departing memories echo through the chambers of our hearts.

* * * * *

Write soon and remember your ever
Affectionate friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO G. B. LORING

Cambridge, Sept. 18, 1839.

. . . Among other plans that have been fermenting in my brain is one of writing a tale founded on the idea of a man's having the power given him of seeing into the minds of other men and women, as Asmodeus did into their houses. Whether it will ever come to anything I know not. Another plan I have is that of writing a series of communications for some periodicals, in the form of Eckermann and Boswell:—imaginary conversations with an imaginary great man, in which I can put down anything and everything of worth that occurs to me in the course of the day.

There is a camp-meeting in operation over at Brook-

line, on the borders of the lake. Truly a glorious place to make men worship God—perhaps even without the aid of a camp-meeting! I rode by the place last night, and what do you think I saw? An empty reed shaken by the wind of hypocrisy or fanaticism? No! a party of eight or ten gamblers busily employed round a little table beneath the trees by the light of lamps or lanterns—a scene worthy of Rembrandt, who painted with a brush dipped in darkness, with a gleam as of hell-fire cast on his canvas by way of light. Well, whatever others were doing, this little band were toiling in their vocation. Truly, the good old Latimer was right when he said, in his honest way, that the devil was the faithfullest of bishops, going up and down continually in his diocese, and distraining for rent when his parishioners were on their death-beds, and that not for *tithes* merely, but for the whole of his debtor's eternal substance. His diocesans, too, are no whit less zealous than he. I entertain a high respect for you, O Sathanas! Ten like thee would have saved Sodom and Gomorrah, hapless cities of the plain!

> "I'm laith to think o' yon grim den,
> E'en for your sake!"

Verily, I see you now in the shape of a great black bell-wether, leading the sheep away from the fold and the good Shepherd. And are you looking over my shoulder even at this moment, auld Hornie? I doubt. For methinks such a heavenly moon and quiet stars as these were enough to drive Sin back to hell again, or at least to give you some such pang as [you felt] when the rapt Milton, sitting on the bank of

"Siloah's brook,
That flowed fast by the oracle of God,"

saw you looking at the happy dwellers in Eden. Ah, my old boy, stick your nose into my business, and you'll be [sorry] that St. Dunstan's fiery tongs left anything for me to grasp! J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, Dec. 2, 1839.

. . . I went up to Watertown on Saturday with W. A. White, and spent the Sabbath with him. You ought to see his father! The most perfect specimen of a bluff, honest, hospitable country squire you can possibly imagine. His mother, too, is a very pleasant woman—a sister of Mrs. Gilman. His sister * is a very pleasant and pleasing young lady, and knows more poetry than any one I am acquainted with. I mean, she is able to repeat more. She is more familiar, however, with modern poets than with the pure wellsprings of English poesy.

* Miss Maria White, afterwards Mrs. Lowell.

II

1840–1849

ENGAGEMENT TO MISS WHITE.—LAW AND LETTERS.—WRITING FOR THE MAGAZINES.—"A YEAR'S LIFE."—THE *PIONEER*. —"POEMS."—"CONVERSATIONS ON SOME OF THE OLD POETS."—MARRIAGE.—CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE PENNSYLVANIA *FREEMAN*.—THE *ANTI-SLAVERY STANDARD*.—"THE BIGLOW PAPERS."—THE "FABLE FOR CRITICS."—"SIR LAUNFAL."

LETTERS TO GEORGE B. LORING, WILLIAM A. WHITE, CHARLES F. BRIGGS, MISS L. L. WHITE, H. W. LONGFELLOW, EDWARD M. DAVIS, SYDNEY H. GAY, CHARLES R. LOWELL, JAMES T. FIELDS, MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW.

In the summer of 1840 Lowell finished his studies at the Harvard Law School and received the degree of Bachelor of Laws. His profession had become of unexpected importance to him, for owing to a misfortune, by which the greater part of his father's personal property had been swept away, he had now to depend on his own exertions for a livelihood. Moreover, in the autumn of this year he became engaged to Miss Maria White, with the prospect of marriage indefinitely postponed until he should be able to support a wife. His love not only made him happy; it also confirmed all that was best in his nature, quickening his powers into full activity, and rapidly developing his character. Miss White was a woman of unusual loveliness, and of gifts of mind and

heart still more unusual, which enabled her to enter with complete sympathy into her lover's intellectual life and to direct his genius to its highest aims. Younger in years than he, she was more mature in feeling, more disciplined in character, and to her Lowell owed all that a man may owe to the woman whom he loves. She, too, was a poet, and her poetry was the simple expression of tender feeling and sympathetic perceptions, and occasionally of delicate but genuine imaginative faculty. She possessed also, in large measure, the culture and the moral enthusiasm which were characteristic of many of the best New England women of the time.

For a year or two now Lowell had been a frequent contributor of verse, under his own name or under the pseudonym of Hugh Perceval, to the *Knickerbocker Magazine*, the *Southern Literary Messenger*, and other periodicals. Much of it was crude and tentative, but some of it displayed an acquaintance with nature and a spirit of vigorous individuality rare in the verse of youth, and giving assurance of better things to come. He was already acquiring reputation as a poet of promise, and in the autumn of this year he determined to collect his poems for publication in a volume to be called "A Year's Life." It was scarcely a judicious venture for a young man just about to enter on the practice of law, and to whom the repute of being devoted to his profession was important. But the true interests of his intelligence were not to be sacrificed to prudential considerations. He cared more for poetry than for law or for money. The little volume contained, amid much of inferior worth, poems which at once gave Lowell the highest

place among the younger American poets; and the reader of the "Earlier Poems" in his collected works will find in them the accordant prelude of the fuller tones of coming years.

For the next year or two literature occupied him more than law, and in the autumn of 1842, in the hope of bettering his fortune, he undertook to start a periodical, a monthly journal, with the assistance of his friend Mr. Robert Carter as managing editor. Mr. Carter was a man of varied talents and acquisitions, but with little more genius for money-making than his co-editor. The *Pioneer*, as the magazine was called, had a short life of three months, and left its luckless projectors burdened with a considerable debt.

The greater part of the winter of 1842–43 was spent by Lowell in New York, under treatment for his eyes, which had been giving him trouble. Boston and New York were then far more widely separated in time, and perhaps also in spirit, than at present, and the long stay in the larger city was an experience of value to the young poet. It brought him into relations with a new set of men, especially men of letters of his own generation. He saw much of Page, the painter, who was already his friend; and he formed a friendship, which soon became intimate, with Mr. Charles F. Briggs, who, like himself, was seeking a precarious support from literature, and was one of the most active contributors to the magazines of the day. Mr. Briggs was born in Nantucket, and retained through life a humor racy of his native island. He had had an adventurous youth, but he had now, for some time, been acquiring reputation as a

writer of novels, short tales, and essays. A few years later Lowell described him in "A Fable for Critics," under the name of the hero of one of his novels:

"There comes Harry Franco, and, as he draws near,
You find that's a smile which you took for a sneer;
One half of him contradicts t' other; his wont
Is to say very sharp things and do very blunt;
His manner's as hard as his feelings are tender,
And a *sortie* he'll make when he means to surrender;
He's in joke half the time when he seems to be sternest,
When he seems to be joking, be sure he's in earnest;
He has common sense in a way that's uncommon,
Hates humbug and cant, loves his friends like a woman,
Builds his dislikes of cards and his friendships of oak,
Loves a prejudice better than aught but a joke;
Is half upright Quaker, half downright Comeouter;
Loves Freedom too well to go stark mad about her;
Quite artless himself, is a lover of Art,
Shuts you out of his secrets and into his heart,
And though not a poet, yet all must admire
In his letters of Pinto his skill on the liar."

In December, 1843, Lowell published his second volume of "Poems," dedicating it to his friend William Page. It contained the best of what he had written since "A Year's Life" appeared, and gave evidence of the rapid ripening of his powers. But they were not yet at their full. The volume added to his reputation, and made it clear that his life was to be given to literature rather than to law. In the course of the next year he was busy with a series of interesting and discursive essays, under the title of "Conversations on Some of the Old Poets," and at the end of the year they

were published in a volume which its author never cared to reprint. The poets who served for the main subject of his discourse were Chaucer, Chapman, Ford, and other old dramatists. The book shows his moral no less than his intellectual growth. It is full of the poetic ardor of youth, and of its moral enthusiasm. The criticism is sympathetic and of wide range, and the style already manifests those qualities which were in time to win for its writer a place among the masters of English prose. But the book is the work of a reformer and a radical quite as much as of a literary critic. It has the lavishness of a genius conscious of its large powers and possessions, together with the earnestness of a character deepened by love, and attaining through it a serious sense of the duties and claims of life.

Although the income which he could derive from his writing was small and precarious, it seemed sufficient for modest needs, and at the end of December, 1844, he was married. His wife's health was delicate, and, for the sake of the milder climate, they at once, upon their marriage, went to Philadelphia, where they spent the winter in lodgings. Lowell was engaged as a regular contributor to the Pennsylvania *Freeman*, an anti-slavery weekly paper, once edited by Whittier, but then in charge of Mr. James Miller McKim, a man of intelligence and character, with whom it was a pleasure to be associated, and for whom Lowell entertained a high respect and warm regard.

Returning to Elmwood in June, the following months were spent peacefully and happily at home. On the last day of the year a new joy came to him in the birth

of a daughter. Early in the summer of 1846 he made an engagement to write regularly for the *Anti-Slavery Standard*, published in New York, the organ of the American Anti-Slavery Society. The paper was then edited with great ability by Mr. Sidney Howard Gay; but the editor was more or less under the control of a committee of the Anti-Slavery Society, who at times made his chair an uneasy seat. It was arranged that Lowell was to receive a salary of five hundred dollars a year for a weekly contribution of prose or verse. These terms were modified after the first year, but his connection with the paper lasted till the spring of 1850, nearly four years. The conditions of the time were grave, the events stirring, and Lowell, deeply moved by the steady and relentless progress of the slave-power, poured himself out from week to week in a succession of poems and articles in prose of rare vigor and effect. Many of the poems which he contributed to the *Standard* were at once widely circulated, and attained a popularity which they have never lost. Hosea Biglow and Parson Wilbur transferred their contributions from the Boston *Courier* to the *Standard*, and became widely known. Here first appeared the noble poem to Garrison and that to John G. Palfrey, the fine stanzas to Freedom, and others of the same order; but together with the poems expressly directed against slavery appeared others of different nature and tone, in which the poet spoke more as poet and less as citizen—poems which revealed his inner life, such as "Eurydice," "The Parting of the Ways," "Beaver Brook," and "The First Snow-Fall."

The last of these is the record of the sorrow which had come to him in the death of his little daughter Blanche, in March, 1847, and of tremulous happiness renewed in the birth of a second daughter in the autumn of the same year.

The wide range of Lowell's powers and his extraordinary intellectual facility were never shown more fully than in 1848. In this year the first series of "The Biglow Papers," with its delightful introductory matter, was collected and issued in a volume, while the "Fable for Critics" and "Sir Launfal" were written and published.

TO G. B. LORING

Bate Court, April 22, 1840.

. . . I am at present engaged in the funniest job that ever fell to my lot. I have written (at his earnest and most unescapable urging) some damnable verses for a North Carolina lover to send home to his mistress, who has once refused him! To come to me to plead a cause which I never could gain for myself! Of course the lines are miserable stuff. How *could* I write them? But there was no getting off. They employed my energies in writing and copying not quite an hour, and are now lying under this sheet as I write. They'd *lie* most damnably wherever they were. Ten as pretty nonsense verses as ever lover writ upon his mistress's eyebrow (Shakespeare says "mistress' eyebrow," but he's wrong). Here is a sample—

"The hopes that I cherished,
Alas, they are gone!
In the budding they perished,
And I am alone!"

The man for whom I wrote them is, however, as noble hearted a fellow as ever trod. . . .

. . . By the way, I find quite a difference between this and my college life. I am become quite a popular man, and that without money to spend or going a step out of my way to any one. I am on the best of terms with "Southerners," "Westerners," and "Easterners." If I ever travel through the country it will be of use to me. We have a fine set of men here now. . . .

3.30 P.M.—W—— has just left my room tickled half to death with the stuff. He swears if he gets his Dulcinea that he'll "have me on to the wedding, expenses paid and everything else!" . . .

Yours, J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, May 17, 1840.

. . . I spent last evening at Watertown. Maria White (I can't call her miss) *is* beautiful—so pure and spirit-like. To make a bull—she seems half of earth and *more* than half of Heaven. You ought to see her. I had a time, I tell you—and made a fool of myself to boot.

My head aches horribly or I should write better. God bless you.

TO THE SAME

June 3, 1840.

Thank Heaven! whatsoe'er the rate is
At which some other things are sold,
Nature is ever had "free gratis,
Children half-price," as 'twas of old. . . .

TO THE SAME

Bate Court, Aug. 25, 1840.

. . . I am going to write a tragedy. I have the plot nearly filled out. I think—I *know* it will be good. It will be psycho-historical. I think also of writing a prose tale, which perhaps will appear in chapters in the *Messenger**—if White will pay me. Goethe wrote his "Sorrows of the Young Werther," and I will mine. Alas! the young soul is full of sorrows at that time when it only sees written over the gate of life, "Per me si va in eterno dolore," and has not yet found that, as the God-man "descended into hell, and rose the third day," so for us this gate leads also to heaven. If I don't die, George, you will be proud of me. I *will* DO somewhat.

They tell me I must study law.
They say that I have dreamed, and dreamed too long;
That I must rouse and seek for fame and gold;
That I must scorn this idle gift of song,
And mingle with the vain and proud and cold.
Is, then, this petty strife
The end and aim of life,
All that is worth the living for below?
O God! then call me hence, for I would gladly go! . . .

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Nov. 24, 1840.

I shall print my volume. Maria wishes me to do it, and that is enough. I had become tired of the thought

* The *Southern Literary Messenger*, published at Richmond, Va., for many years the chief literary periodical of the Southern States. Its editor was Mr. Thomas W. White.

of it. . . . "Irene" has gathered good opinions from many. I am beginning to be a lion.

TO THE SAME

Jan. 2, 1841.

. . . I know that God has given me powers such as are not given to all, and I will not "hide my talent in mean clay." I do not care what others may think of me or of my book, because if I *am* worth anything I shall one day show it. I do not fear criticism so much as I love truth. Nay, I do not fear it at all. In short, I am *happy*. Maria *fills* my ideal and I satisfy hers. And I mean to live as one beloved by such a woman should live. She is every way noble. People have called "Irene" a beautiful piece of poetry. And so it is. It owes all its beauty to her. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Feb. 18, 1841.

. . . My book, as you must know, is out. It has been received with distinguished favor, but as yet only two hundred and twenty-five copies have sold. I am to be reviewed in the next *North American*. . . .

TO THE SAME

Sunday, March 14, 1841.

. . . My book does as well as can be expected. All the notices of it have been very favorable except that of your honest friend and fellow-politician the editor of the *Post*, who blackguarded me roundly.

The *Post* has blackguarded my book!
But, then, 'tis understood
That his most usual course he took—
To sneer at all that's good.

Monday, ½ past 10.

I have just finished something which I ought to have done long ago. I have copied off a ballad of mine for a publisher of the name of D. H. Williams, who is getting out an annual. He will pay me five dollars per page, and more if the book sells well. Hawthorne, Emerson, and Longfellow are writing for it, and Bryant and Halleck have promised to—so that I shall be in good company, which will be pleasing to groundlings.

Three hundred copies of my book have sold. A new periodical in New York, *Arcturus** by name, which is as transcendental as Gotham *can* be, has given me a *very* pleasant notice, premising that they know nothing of the author but that he has written that book.

I am in Chas. G. Loring's office—and am getting quite in love with the law. . . .

Since I have been in Boston, and in the office, I have written the best sonnets I have yet written, and one of the best (if not the best) lyrics, which last, as well as the ballad, I mean to print in the annual as aforesaid.

I am glad of this, because I feared that the law would cover all the sunny greensward of my soul with its dust. But Maria will hinder all that.

* "A Journal of Books and Opinions," edited by Evert A. Duyckinck and Cornelius Matthews, writers of some note in their day, but both alike, after striving years, fallen into the pleasant peace of oblivion.

TO W. A. WHITE

39 Court Street,
Boston, Nov. 2, 1841.

My dear W.,— . . . The magazine* is published this morning (Tuesday, November second, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and forty-one), and notices are forthcoming in the daily journals. The "respectable" *Daily*† has a puff this morning which I have not seen. The covers are changed to a brownish free-stone color. The figure on the cover with wings, etc., is intended, saith the artist, to portray the Genius of Literature. But how any man in his senses could set forth such a fat, comfortable-looking fellow as the *vera effigies* of what is hungriest, leanest, empty-pursiest, and without-a-centiest on earth I am at a loss to say. John King says he considers it as a flat number—but I think it is very tolerable, considering that it has not yet got under way. I am going to write some criticisms on the Old Dramatists for some of the future numbers, which will be a cheap and convenient way of reprinting the best scenes and passages. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Dec. 9, 1841.

My dear Will,— . . . I have not been idle. I have

* This was the *Boston Miscellany*, a monthly journal, edited by Nathan Hale, Jr. Mr. Hale was a man of marked ability; he was a college friend and classmate of Lowell. The *Miscellany* was an ambitious attempt, and failed in the course of its second year of existence. It is now sought for by collectors, because it contains contributions by Hawthorne, Poe, Parsons, and Lowell, besides those of many less eminent writers who are not yet wholly forgotten. Lowell's papers on the "Old Dramatists" have an interest as showing his early taste for and study of authors who were his familiars through life, and who were the subject of his latest writing in prose.

† The *Daily Advertiser*, the chief newspaper in Boston at that time.

written some very fine sonnets, some of which, if you have the luck to encounter such periodicals as *Arcturus*, the *Miscellany*, or *Graham's Mag.*, will delight your eager vision—a vision than which I only know *one* superior. . . . I have just come from spending the evening at ——'s (where Maria is making sunshine just now), and have been exceedingly funny. I have, in the course of the evening, recited near upon five hundred extempore macaronic verses; composed and executed an oratorio and opera (entirely unassisted and, *á la* Beethoven, on a piano without any strings, to wit: the centre-table); besides drawing an entirely original view of Nantasket Beach, with the different groups from Worrick's disporting themselves thereon, and a distant view of the shipping in the harbor, compiled from the ship-news of our indefatigable friend Ballard, of the *Daily*, and making a temperance address; giving vent, moreover, to innumerable jests, jokes, puns, oddities, quiddities, and nothings, interrupted by mine own laughter and that of my hearers; and eating an indefinite number of raisins, chesnuts (I advisedly omit the "t"), etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc., etc. . . .

TO G. B. LORING

Boston, April 11, 1842.

. . . I agree with you that, if possible, it would be best for you to settle yourself as near Boston as may be. It is always disagreeable for a man of education to be pitched into the midst of a set of barbarians. If you ever get into full practice, you will often be too weary

to find solace among your books, and when you look around for the instructive companionship and quiet conversation of men of letters, you feel your loneliness very bitterly. Near the city you can almost always find a few men in every town who have kept aloof from the general scramble, and found a truer wealth in the hearts of the old poets and philosophers which lie embalmed in their undying works. You say that life seems to be a struggle after nothing in particular. But you are wrong. It is a struggle after the peaceful home of the soul in a natural and loving state of life. Men are mostly unconscious of the object of their struggle, but it is always connected in some way with this. If they gain wealth and power or glory it is all to *make up for this* want, which they *feel*, but scarce know what it is. But nothing will ever supply the place of this, any more than their softest carpets will give their old age the spring and ease which arose from the pliant muscles of youth. . . .

TO THE SAME

April 20, 1842.

. . . The next number of the *Democratic Magazine* will contain five sonnets of mine, suggested by Wordsworth's sonnets in favor of capital punishment. They are very good—some lines in them are perhaps better than anything of the kind I have written. I shall have three sonnets in the May number of *Arcturus;* and a sonnet, a little poem written in 1840, a sketch in prose called "My First Client," and article number two on the "Old Dramatists," with my name [in the *Boston Miscellany*]. In *Graham* I shall unfortunately have nothing.

I have lost two months by not sending early enough. There was twenty dollars lost outright.

TO THE SAME

May 11, 1842.

I should have answered your letter before, but that I have been very busy reading and writing for my third article on the "Old English Dramatists." But I have determined not to try to finish it for the June, but to print it in the July, number of the *Miscellany*. The first two have been received with great favor — *very* great. . . . All this is pleasant to me, because it seems to increase my hope of being able one day to support myself by my pen, and to leave a calling which I hate, and for which I am not *well* fitted, to say the least.

I mean to make the third article better than either of the others. The task of selection is the hardest part of it. I suppose I must have marked more than a thousand passages in Massinger's plays, some of them quite long, and of these I can, of course, only extract a very small number. This is especially true in the case of Massinger, who has not so many *strikingly* fine passages as many of the other dramatists, and yet has many of about the same merit. . . .

I shall be glad to see your articles against the slavery correspondent of the *Post*. If men will not set their faces against this monstrous sin, this choragus of all other enormities, they, at least, need not smile upon it, much less write in its favor. What, in the name of God, are all these paltry parties, which lead men by the nose against all that is best and holiest, to the freedom of five

millions of men? The horror of slavery can only be appreciated by one who has felt it himself, or who has imagination enough to put himself in the place of the slave, and fancy himself not only virtually imprisoned, but forced to toil, and all this for no crime and for no reason except that it would be *inconvenient* to free them. What if the curse of slavery were entailed upon them by their ancestors, does this in the least affect the clear question of right and wrong? If this be so, then no barbarism can be ever reformed. But, thank God, it is not so. This is only the excuse which a pandering conscience, a terrified love of gain, invent for the slave-holders, and in which we Northern freemen sustain and encourage them. Are the slaves to be forever slaves because our ancestors committed a horrible crime and wrong in making them so? Only think for a moment on the miserable and outrageous lie and fallacy here. . . .

TO THE SAME July 6, 1842.

. . . We have been having temperance celebrations down here at a great rate, and some in which I have had a particular personal interest. Last Friday Maria presented a banner to the Watertown Washington Total Abstinence Society in the name of the women of Watertown. There were more than a thousand persons present. The meeting was held on a beautifully wooded hill belonging to Mr. White. The day was as fine as could have been wished. Maria looked—I never saw any woman look so grand. She was dressed in snowy white, with a wreath of oak-leaves and water-lilies round her head, and a water-lily in her bosom. There were a

great many tears in a great many eyes when she presented the banner. She did it as might have been expected. She said a few words in clear, silvery tones. She told them that the banner came from their mothers and sisters, their daughters and wives, and they must hold it sacred. The motto on the banner was excellent. It was this verse from the Bible: "My son, if sinners entice thee, consent thou not." The next day Joe Bird (one of the musical ones), a great brown-faced, hard-handed giant of a farmer, overtook me and carried me part of the way into town in his wagon. He said: "I s'pose it's superfluous to tell *you* of it, but I never saw such a face as Miss Maria White's in my life. There's something supernatural about it. I dunnow what to call it but heavenly and angelic. When she smiles, it don't seem as though she smiled, but as if an actual lustre shone out of all her face. I love my wife as much as I know how, and always shall till I die; but, her to the contrary notwithstanding, I must say I never saw a face that came anywhere's near Miss Maria's. When she was presenting the banner I couldn't help crying, I tell you." I could have hugged the great brawny, honest-hearted fellow.

On the 4th I attended, by invitation, the celebration of the Cambridgeport W. T. A. Society. We dined in a fine large pavilion, which proved, however, quite too small for the multitude. So the children were fed first, and then we sat down. There were more than three thousand in all, it was said. I was called out, and made a speech of about ten minutes from the top of a bench to an audience of two thousand, as silent as could be.

I spoke of the beauty of having women present, and of their influence and interest in reforms. I ended with the following sentiment, "The proper place of woman—at the head of the pilgrims back to purity and truth." In the midst of my speech I heard many demonstrations of satisfaction and approval—one voice saying "Good!" in quite an audible tone. I was told that my remarks were "just the thing." When I got up and saw the crowd it inspired me. I felt as calm as I do now, and could have spoken an hour with ease. I did not hesitate for a word or expression even once. . . .

TO THE SAME

Boston, Sept. 20, 1842.

. . . I am very happy. In the first place, I have Maria; in the second, I am growing slowly into favor as a poet; in the third, I have quite a reasonable prospect of getting into a lucrative literary employment next year, and the last cause of joy I will detail more at length. I have got a clue to a whole system of spiritual philosophy. I had a revelation last Friday evening. I was at Mary's, and happening to say something of the presence of spirits (of whom, I said, I was often dimly aware), Mr. Putnam entered into an argument with me on spiritual matters. As I was speaking the whole system rose up before me like a vague Destiny looming from the abyss. I never before so clearly felt the spirit of God in me and around me. The whole room seemed to me full of God. The air seemed to waver to and fro with the presence of Something I knew not what. I spoke with the calmness and clearness of a prophet.

I cannot yet tell you what this revelation was. I have not yet studied it enough. But I shall perfect it one day, and then you shall hear it and acknowledge its grandeur. It embraces all other systems.

Nor am I at liberty yet to tell you my plan of literary support. If I could see you, I would tell it you by word of mouth, but I cannot bring myself to write it down. Apart from this, I think I may safely reckon on earning four hundred dollars by my pen the next year, which will support me. Between this and June, 1843, I think I shall have freed myself of debt and become an independent man. I am to have fifteen dollars a poem from the *Miscellany*, ten dollars from *Graham*, and I have made an arrangement with the editor of the *Democratic Review*, by which I shall probably get ten or fifteen dollars more. Prospects are brightening, you see. I am going to write an article on Marvell for the *Democratic Review*, and shall have a poem (a good one, too) in the October number.

TO THE SAME

Boston, Nov. 30, 1842.

I do not write letters to *anybody*—the longer I live the more irksome does letter-writing become to me. When we are young we need such a vent for our feelings. Unable to find a friend in the spiritual world, we feel more keenly the necessity of one in the material to whom we may pour out the longings that oppress us. But, as we grow older and find more ease of expression, especially if it be in a way by which we can reach the general ear and heart, these private utterances become less and less needful to us.

But, dear George, I have been harassed more than you can well think with the *business* of my magazine. I have staked all my present hope upon this one throw of the dice, and you may suppose that I have not felt at leisure enough to write.

I have an article to write for my magazine of six or seven pages which requires care and toil, and I have but a day or two left to finish it in—and it is but begun. It is on the plays of Middleton, and *ought* to be interesting.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 15, 1843.

. . . I have been very happy for the last day or two in writing a long poem in blank verse on Prometheus, the Greek archetype of St. Simeon Stylites, the first reformer and locofoco* of the Greek Mythology. It will be quite worth your while to read it when it is printed. I hope to see it in the July number of the *Democratic Review*, but fear it was too late, having only been sent on this morning. It is the longest and best poem I have ever written, and overrunning with true radicalism and antislavery. I think that it will open the eyes of some folk and make them *think* that I am a poet, whatever they may say.

I am now at work on a still longer poem in the *ottava rima*, to be the first in my forthcoming volume. I feel more and more assured every day that I shall yet do something that will keep my name (and perhaps my

* The popular designation for some years of a portion of the Democratic Party in the United States; hence, used for a Democrat.

body) alive. My wings were never so light and strong as now. So hurrah for a niche and a laurel! I have set about making myself ambitious. It is the only way to climb well. Men yield more readily to an ambitious man, provided he can bear it out by deeds. Just as much as we claim the world gives us, and posterity has enough to do in nailing the base coin to the counter. But I only mean to use my ambition as a staff to my love of freedom and man. I *will* have power, and there's the end of it. I have a right to it, too, and you see I have put the crown on already. . . .

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Cambridge, Aug. 9, 1843.

. . . My "Prometheus" has not received a single public notice yet, though I think it the best thing I have done, and though I have been puffed to repletion for poems without a tithe of its merit. Your letter was the first sympathy I received. Although such great names as Goethe, Byron, and Shelley have all handled the subject in modern times, you will find that I have looked at it from a somewhat new point of view. I have made it *radical*, and I believe that no poet in this age can write much that is good unless he give himself up to this tendency. For radicalism has now for the first time taken a distinctive and acknowledged shape of its own. So much of its spirit as poets in former ages have attained (and from their purer organization they could not fail of some) was by instinct rather than by reason. It has never till now been seen to be one of the two great wings that upbear the universe.

I have sent another poem to O'Sullivan,* still more radical than "Prometheus," and in some respects better, though, from its subject, incapable of so high a strain as that. . . . The proof of poetry is, in my mind, that it reduce to the essence of a single line the vague philosophy which is floating in all men's minds, and so render it portable and useful and ready to the hand. Is it not so? At least, no poem ever makes me respect its author which does not in some way convey a truth of philosophy. When Shakespeare says, "one touch of nature makes the whole world kin," he has saved the need of a thousand volumes of metaphysics. And the beauty of it is that what a true poet says always *proves itself* to our minds, and we cannot dodge it or get away from it. I say this to show you (since you take an interest in me) what my *aspiration* is. It will be years before I get near it.

Besides writing poems, I have raised the finest chickens in the neighborhood, and I advise you to get a few at Staten Island, if it were only that there is no sound so full of right-down country cheer as the crowing of that lusty bird the cock. If I can I shall see you this summer, but I am deeply in debt for the *Pioneer*, and feel a twinge for every cent I spend. Give my best love to Page, and tell him that unless he has some good reason for keeping my portrait, there are a great many who wish it back—especially *one*, who also sends her love to both of you. . . .

* The editor of the *Democratic Review*.

TO W. A. WHITE

Elmwood, Sept. 19, 1843.

. . . Do not attack the Liberty Party too fiercely. I think myself that they are mistaken in many things. But one should remember that *they are only in error as to the best means of bringing about the Right*, and surely deserve more sympathy at our hands than those whose Creed is *wrong*. I happen myself to know personally some very honest and very good men in that party, and belonging, as I do, neither to the old nor the new organization, I can the more easily form an unbiassed opinion. Moreover, I would be very cautious of abusing the clergy. To most men's ears this sounds like an attack on the *religious sentiment* itself, for the clergyman nowadays, to many a disciple of the cropt Genevan, stands instead of the images and pictures of old Rome. Show that they are *mistaken* as much and as often as you please; but be slow to charge any man, and especially any body of men, with want of principle. I remember when my own eyes were as blind as an owl's to the Sun of Truth, and I learned charity to the blindness of others in the best school. One word more. Be *most* careful in stating facts. If an adversary can show one misstatement (however small) in your argument, he has already confuted you in the most effectual manner to nine tenths of those you are striving to convince.

The doctrine of Fourier seems to be attracting a good deal of attention in Boston just now. Brisbane and Greeley have both lectured there, and, as far as I can judge, with considerable success. Brisbane has begun

a series of articles on the subject in the *Courier*. To me it is a very interesting one. There is a great deal of sound philosophy mixed up with much wild deduction in it. At least we ought to give a respectful hearing to anything that earnestly proposes to make man more aware of his high destiny, and to show him the plainest road thereto. . . .

I am in treaty with Owen to publish a volume for me. He is a little afraid of the "speculation," but is very desirous to publish it, and will probably do so. . . .

I made a short trip down to Bangor the other day, and picked up a great deal of all sorts of things. I met an Ohio abolitionist on board the boat going down, who told me of his stumping a clergyman in a very neat manner. You might use it in one of your speeches. "Says he to me, 'I'm an abolitionist,' says he, 'but then if you set the niggers free they won't work.' Says I, 'You jist take a little walk with me, will ye?' It was aboard the boat, you see, so he says, 'Yes,' and we walks along, and bimeby we met one o' these 'ere black fellers a-carryin' a waiter. 'That 'ere feller's black, ain't he?' says I. 'Yes,' says he, 'sartin—black as the crown o' my hat.' 'Wal,' says I, 'he's to work, ain't he?' 'Yes,' says he agin, 'sartin he is.' So we walks on, and pooty soon I see another on 'em emptyin' slops overboard. 'Ain't that feller black?' says I. 'O' course he is,' says he. 'Wal,' says I, '*he's* to work, ain't he?' 'Sartin,' says he, lookin' as though he knowed what was comin'. So by that we'd got to the kitchen door, and I opened it, and there was six or eight on 'em tight at it. 'Ain't them fellers black?' says I—wal, they stand

considerable, I tell ye. 'Sartin,' says he agin. 'Wal,' says I, 'they're to work, ain't they?' 'Why, you see they be,' says he, rather quick. 'Wal,' says I, 'I hain't nothin' more to say to you.' 'Wal,' says he, laughin' good-natered, 'you hain't no need to say nothin' more.'" A good argument, was it not?

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, March 6, 1844.

. . . You say that my birthplace here has no natural title to the name of "Elmwood." Your delusion is only to be excused by the fact that you have never seen the grounds on which you pass judgment—a delusion which I hope may be dispelled by your visiting me next summer, when, if I do not show you elms enough to vindicate the title we have given it, I will agree that "Bishop's Terrace" has a sweeter sound.

I received the other day a little pamphlet from a Mr. Adamson (do you know him?) on the subject of International Copyright, and, if I knew his address, I should write to him to tell him that I think it the best writing upon that subject which I have ever seen. It is plain and practical, and calculated to convince just the class of persons who need conviction, namely, those who have a repugnancy to ideas—a class much larger than is generally imagined. If I did not heartily dislike Dean Swift, I should compare it with his political tracts. There is one consideration which has occurred to me, and only one, which I missed in reading it. I mean the great benefit it would be to our public libraries to be able to procure cheaper and yet readable editions of good books.

At present we have no good public libraries, yet these are positively essential to make decent scholars of us. That of our university here is, I suppose, the most complete in the country; but for that they are obliged to buy expensive English editions of necessary works, and, of course, are very much restricted as to number. A short time ago $25,000 was raised among our alumni for the benefit of the library, and that sum would have been probably worth twice as much if we had a Copyright Law. . . .

What are you doing now? And how many papers do you correspond with? *For*, I mean; I hope you do not correspond *with* any of them. I am not entitled to the privileges of any reading-room, so that I cannot trace you out myself. New York letters are become very fashionable. You Gothamites strain hard to attain a metropolitan character, but I think if you *felt* very metropolitan you would not be showing it on all occasions. I see that the exponent of your city, the *Herald*, speaks of the Philadelphia papers as the "provincial press." I saw a puff of Mrs. Child, extracted from that paper, in the Boston *Courier* the other day. I should think she would begin to ask herself what crime she had been committing. I suppose Willis will be publishing his epistles in a "*New Mirror* extra" before long, in order that no well-educated family may be without them.

My fowls still continue to be the flower of the neighborhood. There never were such strutters and crowers as my chanticleers, or such *promising* layers as my hens. My father has now reduced his estimate of the cost of each of my eggs to the moderate sum of a shilling. But

I hope to parade them all before your eyes when you come hither—as you must ere long.

My Poems will soon reach a third edition of five hundred. About eleven hundred have thus far been sold, I believe. So I suppose I may get something from the book yet. If anything comes, I shall pocket it with a free heart, in spite of the shame which our anti-copyright gentlemen would fain lay at the door of an author who demands his wages.

Your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Aug. 30, 1844.

My dear Friend,—I did not get your letter of the 19th until yesterday, or you may be sure that I should have written sooner to assure you (if words are needful) of my fullest and tenderest sympathy. Maria sends hers also, and there are tears in the eyes of both of us. . . .

I agree entirely with what you have said of Death in your last letter; but at the same time I know well that the first touch of his hand is cold, and that he comes to us, as the rest of God's angels do, in disguise. But we are enabled to see his face fully at last, and it is that of a seraph. So it is with all. Disease, poverty, death, sorrow, all come to us with unbenign countenances; but from one after another the mask falls off, and we behold faces which retain the glory and the calm of having looked in the face of God. To me, at least, your bereavement has come with the softest step and the most hallowed features, for it has opened a new channel for my love to flow towards you in. More, it has made my

heart tenderer and more open to all, and I can even almost believe that I love Maria better, as I forecast how she and I may be called upon to bear the same trial together. The older I grow, the less am I affected by the outward observances and forms of religion, and the more confidingness and affection do I feel towards God. "He leadeth me in green pastures." Trust in Providence is no longer a meaningless phrase to me. The thought of it has oftener brought happy tears into my eyes than any other thought except that of my beloved Maria. It is therefore no idle form when I tell you to lean on God. I know that it is needless to say this to you, but I know also that it is always sweet and consoling to have our impulses seconded by the sympathy of our friends.

> "We all are tall enough to reach God's hand,
> The angels are no taller."

In your present affliction you have (according to my idea of poetry) the best right to pass judgment upon the merits of the poets. Those are, it seems to me, the great ones who give us something to lean upon in our sorrow, and something yet to look forward to in our deepest joys and our amplest successes. Neither Byron nor Scott does this. Shakespeare does, so does Milton. In a less degree so do Chaucer, Spenser, and Wordsworth. So, I think, do Coleridge, Keats, and Tennyson. If they give us nothing else, they give us at least a feeling of great-heartedness and exaltation which, if it does not lay hold of the hem of God's mantle, at least

"the extremest skirts of glory sees,
And hears celestial echoes with delight."

I know that it will please you if I copy here a little poem which I wrote in April, 1841, and of which I was reminded by what you said of Death in your last. It is crude in as far as its artistic merits are considered, but there is a glimpse of good in it.

Sin hath told lies of thee, fair angel Death,
Hath hung a dark veil o'er thy seraph face,
And scared us babes with tales of how, beneath,
Were features like her own. But I, through grace
Of the dear God by whom I live and move,
Have seen that gloomy shroud asunder rent,
And in thine eyes, lustrous with sweet intent,
Have read that thou none other wast but Love.

* * * * * *

Thou art the beauteous keeper of that gate
Which leadeth to the soul's desired home,
And I would live as one who seems to wait
Until thine eyes shall say, "My brother, come!"
And then haste forward with such gladsome pace
As one who sees a welcoming, sweet face;
For thou dost give us what the soul loves best—
In the eternal soul a dwelling-place,
And thy still grave is the unpilfered nest
Of Truth, Love, Peace, and Duty's perfect rest.

My now more mature judgment sees many faults in these lines, but I have copied them *verbatim*, since there seems to me to be a charm of simplicity and sincerity about them, which is their chief merit.

I could not restrain my tears when I read what you

say of the living things all around the cast mantle of your child. It *is* strange, almost awful, that, when this great miracle has been performed for us, Nature gives no sign. Not a bee stints his hum, the sun shines, the leaves glisten, the cock-crow comes from the distance, the flies buzz into the room, and yet perhaps a minute before the most immediate presence of God of which we can conceive was filling the whole chamber, and opening its arms to "suffer the little one to come unto him."

God bless you a thousand times and comfort you, for he only can. . . . I know not what I can say to your wife. Most lovingly yours,

J. R. L. and M. W.

I shall write again soon.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Sept. 18, 1844.

My dear Friend,— . . . I have inherited from my father an intellectual temperament which would fain keep its hands soft. I feel the sorrows of my friends and their joys with as much intensity as human nature is capable of, but I too often remain satisfied with the feeling. Partly from constitutional indolence and partly from timidity, I sit in the corner with my heart full and let others speak and act. But, with God's help, I am resolved to conquer this. I am too ready to leave things undone, because I am never satisfied with my manner of doing them. . . .

You speak of our marriage as one of "convenience," by which I suppose you mean that our means are such

as to warrant us in being married at any time. This is not the case. My *Pioneer* debts will not be paid before January. . . . My father would have assisted me greatly, but he lost a great part of his own property a few years ago, and his income will hardly keep pace with his generosity. You will be glad to hear, however, that he has offered, without any hint on my part, to build me a cottage on a piece of his land here, if it can be done for a thousand dollars or thereabout. I think that I can put up quite a comfortable little nest for that sum, with a spare chamber for you and your wife whenever you may be able to pay us "provincials" a visit. . . . I have already christened my new castle (though as yet an atmospheric one) "Elmwood Junior," much to the delight of my father, who is one of the men you would like to know. He is Dr. Primrose in the comparative degree, the very simplest and charmingest of sexagenarians, and not without a great deal of the truest magnanimity. Nothing delights him so much as any compliment paid to me, except the idea of building me a cottage. If you could see him criticising the strut or crow of one of my chanticleers with a child's enthusiasm, or reading a review of my poems which he does not think laudatory enough (at the same time professing himself a disciple of Pope and pretending that he can't understand more than a tithe of what I write), or pointing out the advantages of the site he has selected for planting the Colony from Elmwood Senior, or talking of the efficacy of prayer, or praising "the old Federal Party with Washington at its head," or speaking of Jefferson as harshly as his kind heart will let him speak of anybody—in

short, if you had a more than Asmodeus-faculty and could take the roof off his heart, you would fall in love with him. He has had far more sorrow, too, than most men, and his wounds have been in his tenderest part, . . . but nothing could shake my beloved and honored father's trust in God and his sincere piety. . . .

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

I have partly written a poem on Columbus, to match with "Prometheus" and "Cromwell." I like it better than either in point of artistic merit.

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, Jan. 16, 1845.
127 Arch Street.

My dear Friend,—I received this morning the two numbers of your *Broadway Journal*, and am in haste to tell you how much I like it. I know all you wish to say about the difficulty of starting—of fulfilling all your notions in the first few numbers—but with all that I must say that I think you have succeeded in making a very interesting paper. Before I go further, I will find a few faults. . . .

I shall, I doubt not, have something to send you by the early part of next week. I mean in prose. As to the arrangement you propose, I know not what to say. In spite of your surmise, I am so little in the habit of measuring what I do by dollars and cents that nothing is harder for me than to set a value on my wares. In your case I am completely cornered. I know nothing

of your ability, and I certainly should steer by that if I were better informed. I cannot think that my contributions will be so valuable as those of many others. You know best.

I understand you to mean that the prose contributions shall be anonymous. For "Columbus" I should expect more than for prose. But I had a thousand times rather give it to you (as it would be my natural impulse to do) than think you had paid me more for it than you could easily afford. I know that you would not think that you had paid too *much* for it—but for me, I could write a better poem, but could never get rid of such a recollection. I wish you to treat me as a friend. I do not speak in a worldly sense, meaning that you should do the best for me you can, but that you should call on me to do the best for you that I can.

You know our circumstances exactly. . . . All I ask for is enough for necessaries. Graham will no doubt give me (as he has done) $30 for a poem; my new book* will pay me $100 for the first edition if it sells well; my volume of poetry may be called $50 a year more. . . . Another source of revenue has opened to me since I have come hither. The antislavery Friends pay me $5 for a leader to their paper which comes out once a fortnight, making $10 per month while I am here. You see I am not in want. . . .

Yours lovingly,

J. R. L.

Maria sends her love to you and your wife.

* "Conversations on the Old Poets."

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, Feb. 25, 1845.

Amid infinite interruptions, I have at last managed to finish a poem for you which is better in conception than in execution.* I intended it to be one of the best I have ever written, but have a sort of notion that it is rather flat. It certainly is so (as all poems must be) compared with the conception. Written in the metre which I have chosen it is perhaps too long, but the plot would have sufficed for quite a long and elaborate poem, into which a good deal of reflection and experience might have been compressed. However, I think that you will "kind o' like it."

To-morrow (Wednesday) I am going out into the country to spend two or three days with some orthodox Quakers, and to-day I have got to write a leader for the Pennsylvania *Freeman*, which must be done before noon.

I do not know whether to be glad or sorry that you have associated Poe and Watson with you as editors. I do not know the last; the first is certainly able, but I think that there should never be more than one editor with any proprietary control over the paper. Its individuality is not generally so well preserved. You know best.

The paper is highly spoken of by all who see it, and I trust will succeed to your wish. . . .

* "The Ghost-Seer," printed in the *Broadway Journal*, March 8, 1845.

TO THE SAME

Philadelphia, March 21, 1845.

. . . I know, my dear friend, how hard a thing it is to get a paper under way. I know, by bitter experience in the *Pioneer*, how many conflicting interests are involved and how impossible it is at first to make it all you wish it.

I do not wish to see the *Journal* a partisan. I think it could do more good by always speaking of certain reforms and of the vileness of certain portions of our present civilization as matters of course, than by attacking them fiercely and individually. It always goes against my grain to say anything ill of a man or men, and I assure you that (minister's and conservative's son as I am) I do not occupy my present position without pain.

If I do not help you efficiently when I get out of the turmoil I am in here—why, I shall add a large square to the paving of hell.

We are just about to start for the country, and I have no time to add anything more. . . .

You will be glad to hear that the first edition of my "Conversations" (1000) are gone already. I begin to feel rich. Owen owes me nearly $300 at this moment! I hope my wealth will not make me proud. . . .

TO MISS L. L. WHITE

New York, May 24, 1845.

My dear Lois,—Yesterday, having been a day of extraordinary excitement and adventure in the wedded

life of Maria and myself, seems to afford me an opportunity of giving you Scripture measure in the matter of the letter I promised to write you from Philadelphia. Whether from Philadelphia or New York, however, matters very little, since my heart was as near you in one place as in the other.

I shall begin my account of yesterday's proceedings with a sketch of an interesting scene which took place in our chamber yesterday morning. It had been arranged beforehand that we should make an excursion to Greenwood Cemetery in the forenoon, and visit Mrs. and Miss P——, who live in Brooklyn (near the cemetery) on our return. Now, you must know that I am becoming more and more inclined to Grahamism every day, and on the particular morning of yesterday was indulging Maria with my views on that subject, when the following dialogue took place:

I. "I think I shall eat no meat after our return home."

M. "Why not begin to-day?"

I. (With heroic excitement) "I will!"

M. "I'm sure we've had nothing in the way of meat here that has been very tempting."

I. "True, but we shall doubtless have a fine dinner at the P——'s. And, on second thoughts, I believe I shall begin my reform to-morrow."

(*Exeunt.* End of 1st Act.)

The next scene of this exciting drama is laid in Brooklyn, where we sat waiting in a curious affair called an omnibus, and regarded as such with intense pride by

the driver. My opinion in regard to this machine is not fully made up. At first I was inclined to regard it as the first crude idea of a vehicle which entered the creative mind; but afterwards I was more inclined to believe it to have [been] an instrument of torture devised by the Inquisition, and given by a Jesuit, in the disguise of a very benevolent old gentleman, to the proprietor of the line for the purpose of punishing such heretics as could not otherwise be got into the power of the Holy Office. It was dragged by two creatures who might have been put into any menagerie and safely exhibited as sea-horses, for all the resemblance they bore to the original land animal of the same name. While sitting waiting for these creatures to recover sufficient strength for a start, an Irishwoman, who had regarded us attentively for some time, exclaimed, "Faix! it's a long time it is sence I've seen anny beauty, but I see a dale of it now anny way!" Maria has a private theory that the woman was looking directly at her when she gave voice to this inspiration, but I cannot but think that there was another individual of a different sex . . . but I will say no more. In either case the woman showed a great deal of discernment considering her limited opportunities. Now imagine us to have perambulated the cemetery for the space of three hours with no food but what is technically called food for reflection, suggested by the monstrous inventions which surviving relatives heap over the (properly) mortified remains of the departed. It was now half-past four o'clock, and we had caten nothing since eight in the morning. This was carrying the principles of Grahamism to a supernatural extent. Still, I de-

lighted myself with the reflection that this involuntary asceticism would cease on our arrival at the hospitable mansion of the P——'s. On arriving there we found that their dinner-hour had been recently changed from five o'clock to two! An entirely intellectual banquet had been prepared for us, the bill of fare of which I give below:

1ST COURSE

Mrs. P—— and the Miss P—— who was at Watertown, who met us in the entry and accompanied us to the drawing-room.

2D COURSE

A tall Miss P—— who was engaged to somebody at sea.

3D COURSE

A short Miss P—— who was engaged to nobody, and whose betrothed (if she had one) would be likely to go to sea and remain there.

4TH COURSE

A Mr. Charles P—— who had inoculated himself for the small-pox, to the great discontentment of his father.

DESSERT,

consisting of inquiries by the tall Miss P—— concerning our travels and relations, and startling revelations of her own perilous journeyings by the short one. This fragrant repast was preceded by a Quaker grace, being a silence of ten minutes, and was interspersed at intervals (such was our gratitude and pious feeling) by similar golden pauses. The whole was followed by the agreeable exercise of walking a mile to the ferry-boat. . . .

If I ever am rich enough, I intend to erect a monument in Greenwood Cemetery to my hopes of dinner which I buried there. Exhausted nature here demands repose.

We go to Staten Island this afternoon. How long we shall stay remains to be seen. We shall probably not arrive at home until the 4th or 5th of next month.

Maria is quite well and has gone to visit Mrs. Child. Love to all.

Affectionately your brother,

J. R. L.

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS*

Elmwood, July 24, 1845.

My dear Friend,— . . . If you had cast about for a hard question to ask me, you could not have been more successful than in desiring my advice as to a course of reading. I suppose that very few men who are bred scholars ever think of such a thing as a *course* of reading after their Freshman year in college. Their situation throws books constantly in their way, and they select by a kind of instinct the food which will suit their mental digestion, acquiring knowledge insensibly, as the earth gathers soil. This was wholly the case with myself. There is hardly any branch of knowledge in which I have not read *something*, and I have read a great many out-of-the-way books, yet there are many which almost every one reads that I have never even opened. For example, I have read books on magic and astrology, and yet never looked into a history of England. All that I know of it I have acquired by reading the biog-

* This letter, with others addressed to Mr. Davis, was printed in *Harper's Weekly*, April 23, 1892.

raphies of men whose lives *are* the history of England. So, too, I know more of the history of ancient Rome than I do of that of America.

Having now proved myself to be wholly incompetent to give any advice (as is usually, though more unconsciously, the case with advisers), I proceed to give it. If I were in your case, I should read History. Hume and Smollett for England, Robertson for Scotland, Niebuhr and Gibbon for Rome, Mitford for Greece, Bancroft for America. Thucydides and Livy and Herodotus you can read in translations, also Tacitus. Read them always with a modern eye, and note how exactly alike men have been in all ages of the world as far as the *external* motives of life go. In the *internal* you will find a steady progress. You will see men in every age and country with genius, self-devotion, high moral principle—in short, with *inspiration*. You will see the masses always struggling with a blind instinct upward, but never so much as now will you find great principles diffused and forcing men into action. All history shows the poverty and weakness of Force, the wealth and power of Gentleness and Love.

Read also the Reviews; they will keep you abreast of the current of modern literature. In astronomy read Nichol; in geology, Lyell. Michelet's History of France (now publishing) is a good one, I believe.

After you have once begun to read you will need no advice. One book will lead to another, and that to a third. If I think of any better books, I will mention them in another letter. But History must always lie at the foundation. . . .

I blew another "dolorous and jarring blast" in the *Courier* the other day, which you will probably see in the *Liberator* of this week or next.* I was impelled to write by the account of the poor fugitives who were taken near Washington. I think it has done some good. At any rate, it has set two gentlemen together by the ears about Dissolution, and they are hammering away at each other in the *Courier*. Tell Miller that an article for the *Freeman* will reach him as early as Tuesday. . . . Farewell.

I remain, with true love, your friend,

J. R. L.

TO CHARLES F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 8, 1845.

My dear Friend,—I have a remark or two to make upon your last letter before (if I may be allowed to write under the sign Taurus) I begin to answer it. What you say about the "unity of evil" is perfectly true, but you are worse than those "philanthropic eunuchs" you talk about if you consider the "unity of evil" as a sufficient reason for putting one's hands in one's pockets and sitting quietly down upon the fence in the sun. You are, like most men, satisfied with a single truth—you must cultivate your acquisitiveness in that direction a little more. I admit that when all these sore boils with which God hath smitten our social

* The stanzas beginning

"Look on who will in apathy, and stifle they who can
The sympathies, the hopes, the words, that make man truly man."

system spring from one disease, it would be idle to apply external remedies to *one* of them, meanwhile leaving all the rest to grow up to a more poisonous and incurable head. Nor is this the system of therapeutics which obtains among abolitionists. We believe that the only remedy for this terrible disease is the application of Christianity to life. We cry out most loudly against slavery because that seems to be the foulest blotch, and it is easier to awaken the attention of the worldly and indifferent to that than to any other. Their interest once excited, they may be safely left to themselves; for Truth is like that stalwart Paddy at the gate of heaven—if she has been able to get her finger even into the crack of the door of a man's soul, there is never a fear but she will make her whole body follow. For my own part, I had rather be eye-witness of all the cruelty done upon the Southern plantations than see your poor harlots flaunting up and down Broadway. Besides, my dear friend, is it not better (even allowing that the abolitionists are one-sided) to be explicit and constant in our testimony against one sin than silent in regard to all? There is one abolitionist, at least, who seldom lets slip any opportunity for outspeaking against any institution which seems to him to stand in the way of Freedom. Absolute freedom is what I want—for the body first, and then for the mind. For the body first, because it is easier to make men conscious of the wrong of that grosser and more outward oppression, and after seeing that, they will perceive more readily the less palpable chains and gags of tyranny. Believe me, my system is fully as unitarian as your own, and whatever extrav-

agancies I may seem guilty of, you may be sure they have a philosophical bearing (in my eyes) upon the one great object I have in view.

The next remark upon your letter which I have to make is, that if John Quincy Adams does receive eight dollars a day for his hatred of slavery, he does no more than any of the rest of us. If you were to publish an antislavery paper you would charge three dollars a year for it, and so should I. The paying of popular representatives had its origin in a good principle, and has been perverted no more than other good principles by the license of the times. The last English member of the Commons house who took pay was Andrew Marvell, the worthy friend of Milton and possessing even a purer mind than that of the great poet. I would not compare Adams with Marvell, for I think that there is a vast deal of humbug in the reputation of the former. He is not well seen in the very A B C of Freedom. It is a good trait in us Americans that we are so fond of plastering together an image of greatness to fall down before and worship—we shall be all the more ready to worship the reality when we are fortunate enough to get it.

My next defence is about the "green ice."* I did

* In Lowell's poem, "To a Pine-Tree," he had written:

"Thou alone know'st the splendor of winter,
Mid thy snow-silvered, hushed precipices,
Hearing crags of green ice groan and splinter,
And then plunge down the muffled abysses
In the quiet of midnight."

In "The Ancient Mariner," Coleridge says:

"And ice, mast-high, came floating by,
As green as emerald."

not have Coleridge's lines in my mind when I wrote my verses. Coleridge had a fine, true eye, and I would gladly accept him (if I wanted any aid) in confirmation. I *did* trust my own eyes. When I was a boy, my favorite sport was sailing upon Fresh Pond in summer, and in winter helping the hardy reapers to get in their harvest of ice, and never was a field of wheat in July of a more lovely green. You have doubtless seen ice-*bugs* (as most people entomologically pronounce it), and they may not be green, though I think they are described as of all colors. But *my* ice was fresh-water ice, and I am right about it. . . .

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Elmwood, Aug. 13, 1845.

My dear Longfellow,*—I have been meaning to write to you now for some time (though I did not reckon on so *very* bad a pen as this), in order to make some inquiries of you about Brattleborough while you are on the spot. Feeling a movement of the spirit to write this morning, I obey it—so if my letter be stupid, the spirit is to blame for it and not I.

I do not wish to lay too great a burthen upon your already heavy-laden eyes, but I should like to know the expense of living and being watered, and also your impressions of Dr. Wesselhoeft and of the efficacy of the system under his management.

I do not wonder at your being inspired to write a poem upon the summer rain up there, keeping as you

* Mr. Longfellow was at the Brattleborough "Water Cure."

do the sign of Aquarius (or a *fac-simile*) stationary over your heads like Joshua's sun. As Canace's ring taught her the bird dialects "without a master," I suppose your experience at Brattleborough will establish quite a new relation and bond of sympathy between you and the plants. You will be able to enter into all their feelings, whether in a drizzle, a long rain, a sudden, heavy shower, or under the artificial pluviosity of the gardener's watering-pot. After you have finished your forty days and forty nights there, you will be in good case to appreciate the situation of that Yankee Antediluvian whose interview with Noah Miss Martineau has related.

Your poem, by the way, was published here at a very lucky season—just on the heels of a magnificent rain. The very morning before I saw it I was meditating some verses on the self-same theme. *Pereant qui ante nos nostra dixerunt*, says St. Augustine (confound those who plagiarize from us before we were born!), a sentiment which I recommend to Mr. Poe. However, though you have cut me off, I have the satisfaction of having poured out some verses on the subject six years ago, and, oddly enough, in the same irregular measure. My poem, however, was nothing like yours (having only two good verses in it), and I thank you for your timely intervention between me and a new attempt. I am glad you had a kind word for the dear, patient oxen who, as they wallow along through the furrows with the plough, are the only good commentary on Virgil's "Georgics." But I do not (may I say it?) like the metre of your poem, and that for two reasons. Firstly, it does not satisfy my ear (which, to be sure, was not

your object in writing it); and secondly, it will prevent the poem from being widely popular. The *images* in your poem leave nothing to be said—they are a complete landscape, a true Gainsborough—and had the metre been a little more within the compass of the popular ear (which, truly, is *long* enough to compass anything), you would have exhausted the theme. There would nevermore have been room for another poem in the same kind. Have I been too frank? Alas, if we could only be as frank in speech as we can be on paper, what a happy world were this!

Charles Sumner's oration * was published on Saturday. I got it yesterday, and have not yet read it through, but I have read enough to honor him for it. I can warrant his having made *one* fast friend by it, if no more. I suppose he has committed a social *felo de se* by it. I look upon his fearless book as the tombstone of his consideration in the minds of nine tenths of this Infidel Community. Regarding it in this light, and remembering the subject, he might have borrowed a good motto from the Italian burying-grounds—*Carlo Sumner implora pace.* But he is secure of a resurrection, and that before our mythological judgment-angel is put to his trumps. You blew a noble blast in the same key a year ago—it had never occurred to me before that the Arsenal at Springfield could be of *any* use. C. S. will find it of great moment to his character to have put himself among the martyrs. I have had a touch, now and then, of this mosquito-martyrdom of

* On "The True Grandeur of Nations."

the nineteenth century, for my fanaticism of looking at things without the medium of our rose-colored social spectacles, and I only wish I had been pecked at a little more. Christ has declared war against the Christianity of the world, and it must down. There is no help for it. The Church, that great bulwark of our practical Paganism, must be reformed from foundation to weathercock. Shall we not wield a trowel, nay, even carry the heavy bricks and mortar for such an enterprise? But I will not ride over you with my hard-mouthed hobby.

Everything is safe at your house or else your chanticleer lied, for he crowed with a lusty satisfaction as I passed yesterday. I know he would not have had the heart if anything had been amiss. They have begun this morning to plough up your lawn. It would do you good to be at home and get a snuff of the fresh upturned sod.

I wonder if Mrs. Longfellow remembers (I suppose she does not) meeting me at Dr. Channing's once—it is now four years ago. I was then a bashful, shy youth (I am not much better now), and remember keenly the shivering awe with which I plunged into the responsibility of entertaining her. Yet in that conversation (as laborious to her, I doubt not, as to me) she made my heart warm towards her—and it will never grow cold again. She was the first stranger that ever said a kind word to me about my poems. She spoke to me of my "Year's Life," then just published. I had then just emerged from the darkest and unhappiest period of my life, and was peculiarly sensitive to sympathy. My vol-

ume, I knew, was crude and immature, and did not do me justice; but I knew also that there was *a heart* in it, and I was grateful for her commendation. We do not know how cheap the seeds of happiness are, or we should scatter them oftener.

Maria is very well, and we shall both be glad to have you back again for neighbors. I hope we shall see you oftener at Elmwood.

I have written you a scrambling kind of letter, but I felt a motion to write, and, as that does not often occur to me in regard to letters, I made the most of it.

Maria joins me in sending kindest remembrances, and I remain

Affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 21, 1845.

My dear Friend,— . . . Poe, I am afraid, is wholly lacking in that element of manhood which, for want of a better name, we call *character*. It is something quite distinct from genius—though all great geniuses are endowed with it. Hence we always think of Dante Alighieri, of Michael Angelo, of Will Shakespeare, of John Milton—while of such men as Gibbon and Hume we merely recall the works, and think of them as the author of this and that. As I prognosticated, I have made Poe my enemy by doing him a service. In the last *Broadway Journal* he has accused me of plagiarism, and *misquoted* Wordsworth to sustain his charge. "Armour

rustling on the walls on the blood of Clifford calls," * he quotes, italicizing "*rustling*" as the point of resemblance. The word is really "*rusting*"—you will find the passage in Wordsworth's "Song sung at Brougham Castle," etc. My metaphor was drawn from some old Greek or Roman story which was in my mind, and which Poe, who makes such a scholar of himself, ought to have known. There is a similar incident in Chaucer's "Knight's Tale," probably from the same source. Any one who had ever read the *whole* of Wordsworth's poem would see that there was no resemblance between the two passages. Poe wishes to kick down the ladder by which he rose. He is welcome. But he does not attack me at a weak point. He probably cannot conceive of anybody's writing for anything but a newspaper reputation, or for posthumous fame, which is but the same thing magnified by distance. I have quite other aims.

If I had written for the praise of the newspapers I might have been satisfied long ago. But I have never yet (I may speak thus frankly to one whom I love) seen any criticism on my *poetry* (for I value that at a thousand times my prose) that went beneath the surface and saw the spiritual, and above all the present, application of

* Lowell had written in his poem "To the Future":

> "As life's alarums nearer roll,
> The ancestral buckler calls,
> Self-clanging from the walls
> In the high temple of the soul."

Wordsworth's couplet reads—

> "Armour rusting in his halls
> On the blood of Clifford calls."

what I have written since I came of age. Criticism nowadays deals wholly with externals. It looks upon every literary effort as a claim set up for a certain amount of praise, and answers every such claim accordingly. Though I have never yet done anything that was a fair exponent of the poetical abilities which I am conscious of possessing, yet I have confidence enough in myself (even if I desired fame greatly) to wait serenely and quietly for my time to come round. Yet I am annoyed sometimes at being misconceived by meaner men—not as a poet, but as a man. My sorrows are not literary ones, but those of daily life. I pass through the world and meet with scarcely a response to the affectionateness of my nature. I believe Maria only knows how loving I am truly. Brought up in a very reserved and conventional family, I cannot in society appear what I really am. I go out sometimes with my heart so full of yearning towards my fellows that the indifferent look with which even entire strangers pass me brings tears into my eyes. And then to be looked upon by those who *do* know me (externally) as "Lowell the poet"—it makes me sick. Why not as Lowell the man—the boy rather,—as Jemmy Lowell, as I was at school?

Do not understand me as exaggerating the miseries which my lionhood entails on me. I have embarked in too many unpopular causes to be much of a lion yet. Nevertheless my mane has begun to grow, and I would almost give half the rest of my life if I might shirk off upon somebody else all that is generally considered the pleasant result of a literary reputation, and keep the unpleasant part to myself in my happy obscurity. One

reason why I have always felt drawn so strongly towards you is that you have never seemed to look upon me but as a friend, and that when we commune together you lock my authorship on the other side of the door, or admit it only as a third person. Now, how can I expect to be understood, much more to have my poetry understood, by such a man as Poe? I cannot understand the meanness of men. They seem to trace everything to selfishness. Why, B—— (the "Sculptor," as he is called) actually asked Carter how much Poe paid me for writing my notice of him in *Graham's Magazine*. Did such baseness ever enter the head of man? Why, it could not get into the head of a *dog*, even if he had *three* heads like Cerberus. But I shall do something as an author yet. It is my laziness and my dissatisfaction at everything I write that prevents me from doing more. There is something, too, in feeling that the best part of your nature and your performance lies unmined and unappreciated. Do I often talk so much about myself in my letters? If it is wrong, I will be more careful in future. Pay me in my own coin. . . .

TO THE SAME

Wednesday, Feb. 4, 1846.

My dear Friend,—You must count this as two distinct letters, and give me credit accordingly. To tell the truth, I am very much taken up with the baby * at present. It is true our enlarged means enable us to keep a maid, but I do not think Blanche safe in any one's arms

* Born Dec. 31, 1845.

but her mother's and mine, and Maria cannot bear the fatigue of "tending" her a great deal. I belong to a class of philosophers (unhappily, I believe, a small one) who do not believe that children are born into the world to subject their mothers to a diaper despotism, and to be brought down to their fathers after dinner, as an additional digestive to the nuts and raisins, to be bundled up and hurried away at the least symptom of disaffection or disturbed digestion. Unlike many philanthropists, I endeavor to put my principles into practice, and the result is that I find pretty steady employment and (to finish the quotation from the advertisements of serving-men's Elysian Fields) good wages. Blanche already, with a perverted taste, prefers her father to any one else, and considers me (as the antiquaries do whatever they can't explain in the old mythologies, whether it be male or female) as "the personification of the maternal principle." She is a very good child, however, and only cries enough to satisfy us, as the old Greek said, that we have begotten a mortal. The only portentous thing she ever does is to sneeze, and as it would be quite supererogatory in her to do this in order to procure a hearty "God bless you!" from all present, I incline to interpret it by Sir Thomas Browne's theory, who, in his exposure of vulgar errors, after pulling to pieces the notion that there is anything ominous in it, proceeds to inform us that it is an effort of nature to expel any *humor* that may lurk in the brain. If this be so, I should imagine, from Miss Fuller's attempts at facetiousness, which now and then give a melancholy air to the *Tribune*, that she must be an unparalleled sternutator. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Feb. 18, 1846.

My dear Friend,— . . . Transmitted peculiarities and family resemblances have always been a matter of interesting speculation with me, and I sometimes please myself with the fancy that the motto of our family arms—*Occasionem cognosce*—may indicate a similar feeling to my own in the mind of the ancestor who first adopted it. Be that as it may, I never wrote a letter which was not a sincere portrait of my mind at the time, and therefore never one whose contents can hold a rod over me. My pen has not yet traced a line of which I am either proud or ashamed, nor do I believe that many authors have written less from *without* than I, and therefore more piously.

. . . My calling is clear to me. I am never lifted up to any peak of vision—and moments of almost fearful inward illumination I have sometimes—but that, when I look down in hope to see some valley of the Beautiful Mountains, I behold nothing but blackened ruins; and the moans of the down-trodden the world over—but chiefly here in our own land—come up to my ear, instead of the happy songs of the husbandmen reaping and binding the sheaves of light; yet these, too, I hear not seldom. Then I feel how great is the office of poet, could I but even dare to hope to fill it. Then it seems as if my heart would break in pouring out one glorious song that should be the gospel of Reform, full of consolation and strength to the oppressed, yet falling gently and restoringly as dew on the withered youth-flowers of the

oppressor. That way my madness lies, if any. Were I to hang my harp (if we moderns may keep up the metaphor, at least, of the old poets after losing their spirit) on a tree surrounded only by the very sweetest influence of summer nature, and the wind should breathe through its strings, I believe they would sound with a warlike clang.

I do not value much the antislavery feeling of a man who would not have been abolitionist even if no such abomination as American Slavery ever had existed. Such a one would come home from an antislavery meeting to be the unhired overseer of his wife and children and *help* (for I love our Yankee word, teaching, as it does, the true relation, and its being equally binding on master and servant), or he would make slaves of them that he might go to one. It is a very hard thing in society, as at present constituted, for a male human being (I do not say for a man) to avoid being a slaveholder. I never see Maria mending my stockings, or Ellen bringing the water for my shower-bath in the morning, without hearing a faint tinkle of chains. Yet how avoid it? Maria laughs when I propose to learn darning, and Ellen flies into open rebellion and snatches the pail out of my hands when I would fain assume half of the old Israelitish drudgery, and become my own drawer of water. After prolonged controversy and diplomatic negotiation day after day on the cellar-stairs a treaty was concluded by which I was always to bring up my own coal, and yet on this very morning I surprised Ellen, in flagrant violation of the treaty, half way upstairs on her way to my garret with a hodful.

. . . I read "Margaret"* when it first came out, having seen extracted in a newspaper the account of Margaret's first visit to the meeting-house. The book, as a whole, is clumsily constructed and not very well written, but there is a lovely *aura* about it which makes us love it, apart from its many glimpses of rare beauty and touches of genuine humor. Deacon Ramsdill is the first real Yankee I have seen in print. And this reminds me that I have always had it in my mind to write a New England novel which will astonish my friends if it ever gets delivered. Your amazement at a Puseyite Yankee is unphilosophical. The cathedral-and-surplice-mania is the natural reaction from the old *slam-seat* (do you remember the racket after the "long" prayer, which the boys had established into as recognized a part of the services as the scarcely more harmonious noise of wind and catgut in the gallery, and which, being a free motion of the spirit and a genuine enjoyment, I consider as real worship?) meeting-houses and the puritanical creed. Shut Nature out at the door, and she will in at the window, says Sir Roger L'Estrange. If men have not enough spirituality to find an inward beauty in Religion (a creed within the creed—recognized alike by Gentile and Christian), they will begin to bedizen her exterior. You never heard of a poet's sending a pair of ear-rings as a gift to his beloved (though he would find a lovely meaning in them if she chanced to wear them), yet it is a love of the same Beauty (though of a more savage and rude kind) which prompts such a gift in others. I had

* By the Rev. Sylvester Judd—a book which still deserves to find readers.

reserved Blanche as the kernel of my letter, but I have filled it already, and she is so lovely that she will keep till my next. With much affectionate remembrance to you and yours,

We remain your loving friends,

her
Maria Lowell, Blanche x Lowell, and J. R. L.
mark

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS

Elmwood, Feb. 23, 1846.

My dear Friend,— . . . Had you known me before I had used the pen professionally, I might have overwhelmed you with long letters. As it is, I consider every poem I write (whether I publish it or not) as a letter to all those whom I hold personally dear. I feel that I have made a truer communication of myself so than in any other way—that is, that I have in this way written my friends a letter from the truer and better J. R. L., who resides within, and often at a great distance from, the external man, who has some good qualities, but whose procrastination is enough to swamp them all. I put off writing from day to day because I do not like to write a short letter, and cannot bear to send a long one which does not contain the very best essence and outcome of me.

I was just meditating a long letter to you, as I told you in my hurried note, when everything else was driven out of my head by the arrival of a letter by the steamer, which made it necessary for me instantly to prepare an article which I had undertaken to write, and which I had postponed until I could be sure of its being needed.

It is an affair which I wish you to keep strictly to yourself, as the knowledge that I am the author will destroy a part of the effect I wish to produce. I have engaged to write a series of articles for Dickens's new paper,* on "Antislavery in the United States," of which the first has already appeared, and of which I am to forward one by each steamer till I have said my say. Of course, if it became generally known that they were written by a professed abolitionist, it would give them a taint in the delicate nose of the public. The first article is merely introductory, nor will any of them attempt to give any new view, but merely a sketch of the history of the movement without prejudice. . . .

I receive the *Freeman* regularly, and think that it has improved. It seems to have acquired new energy and spirit. I would gladly sometimes send you an article if I felt that I could do any good. I know that it seems a mean sentiment not to be able to do anything for the Right without the reward of seeing an immediate effect. I do not need such bribes, but it seems to me that there are others better qualified than I. When I am writing a poem (like my last, for example), I feel as if I were in my vocation, and though I never hear of it again (as I may truly say I never wish to), I am satisfied with my result. When I agreed to write for the *Freeman* last winter, I did it with fearful misgivings. I did not like to be paid for it either — though, indeed, I took the money from absolute necessity to maintain us independently, which I could not have done without it, and which I was resolved to do without assistance from

* The London *Daily News*.

home, if it were only on bread and water. . . . Our little Blanche is everything to us. She almost hinders me from doing anything but tend her and look at her. She is said by everybody to be a very fine child. She could hardly fail of it with such a mother. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 16, 1846.

. . . I know that I am unreasonable to expect you to leave *your* Maria and the children a minute sooner than is absolutely necessary, but I may take credit to myself for having thus much at least of the child surviving in me—that I often wish for unreasonable things. Indeed, what pleasure is there in the ordinary affairs of life in wishing for anything else? I never think of wishing for my breakfast, but I often wish that you and Miller would drop in to breakfast with me. In this way we get the better of time and space for a little, and can imagine a power of ubiquity in our friends which we should be slow to believe in ourselves. Yet I am sometimes not wholly barren of such a gift, and have often, leaving but a mere shell behind me to counterfeit my presence in Cambridge, walked in at your door, or at No. 3 North Fifth Street, or Friend Parker's, and by the richness and frequency of those spiritual visitations have feigned some plausible excuse to conscience for the poverty of my correspondence. It is true that on these occasions I leave no card, but the unsusceptibility of your own sympathies is to blame if you are witless of my neighborhood. How many a time I have met you coming down Arch Street, looking as grave as if you carried

the weight of your whole warehouse upon your head, or were thinking of war or of slavery or of prostitution, or, in short, of society as it is, and could never get so much as a glance from you! . . . How often have I encountered Miller, buttoned up tight in the leader for the next *Freeman* (which, like a drunkard's appetite, has doubled the frequency of the demand), fearing that slavery may be abolished before he gets it finished, and looking for all the world as if he had relapsed into Presbyterianism, and were just striving to put down an impudent doubt as to whether it were a necessary result of the fitness of things that he should be one of the elect! I have brushed by our excellent friend Charles C. Burleigh, looking like one of the old apostles who had slept in the same room with a Quaker who had gone off in the morning with his companion's appropriate costume, leaving him to accommodate himself as best he might to the straight collar and the single breast of the fugitive. Do not many Quakers go about in an apostolic garb which does not belong to them? Dr. Liddon Pennock has driven by me in his rockaway without once asking me to go out with him to Holmesburg, and I felt as if I deserved it for not having written him a dozen letters since I left Philadelphia. Friend Parker has never once given me one of her benevolent smiles, that make all the poor little friendless children she looks at in the street feel as if they had a mother, though I have walked through Fifth Street, between Market and Arch, many a Fifth-day morning to meet her on her way to market. As I think over all the slights I have received, I begin to feel like a dreadfully injured person.

But I will think of pleasanter matters. You will miss more than you are aware of, I assure you, if you do not spend the night with us, at least before the steamer leaves. Miss Blanche Lowell, in the freshness of her morning spirits, is, in my opinion, a sight well worth a journey from Philadelphia to look upon. Why, she laughs all over. You can see it through her clothes. The very tips of her toes twinkle for joy.* And then there is not a chanticleer in my numerous flock who can compare with her for crowing. She has another grace which I might in modesty omit, but I love truth! She is exceedingly fond of her father. As this is a taste which it is impossible she should have brought from heaven with her, it is only another melancholy instance how early the corrupting influences of earth begin their work. They plant, as we do, in the spring. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY.

Elmwood, June 16, 1846.

My dear Gay,—. . . I wish a distinct understanding to exist between us in regard to my contributions for the *Standard*. When Mrs. Chapman first proposed that I should become a contributor I told her frankly that it

* A year later he wrote, in the anguish of loss, the little poem "The Changeling," stanzas of which seem to echo the happiness in this letter—

"To what can I liken her smiling
Upon me, her kneeling lover?
How it leaped from her lips to her eyelids
And dimpled her wholly over,
Till her outstretched hands smiled also,
And I almost seemed to see
The very heart of her mother
Sending sun through her veins to me!"

was a duty for which (having commenced author very early and got indurated in certain modes of authorship and life) I was totally unfitted. *I* was satisfied with the *Standard* as it was. The paper has never been so good since I have seen it, and no abolitionist could reasonably ask a better. I feared that an uncoalescing partnership of several minds might deprive the paper of that *unity* of conception and purpose in which the main strength of every undertaking lies. This, however, I did not urge, because I knew that a change was to be made at any rate. At the same time I was not only willing but desirous that my name should appear, because I scorned to be indebted for any share of my modicum of popularity to my abolitionism, without incurring at the same time whatever odium might be attached to a complete identification with a body of heroic men and women, whom not to love and admire would prove me unworthy of either of those sentiments, and whose superiors in all that constitutes true manhood and womanhood I believe never existed. There were other considerations which weighed heavily with me to decline the office altogether. In the first place, I was sure that Mrs. Chapman and Garrison greatly overrated my popularity and the advantage which it would be to the paper to have my name attached to it. I am not flattering myself (I have too good an opinion of myself to do so), but judge from something Garrison said to me. It is all nonsense. However it may be in that glorious Hereafter (towards which no man who is good for anything can help casting half an eye), the reputation of a poet who has a high idea of his vocation, is resolved to be

true to that vocation, and hates humbug, must be small in his generation. The thing matters nothing to me, one way or the other, except when it chances to *take in* those whom I respect, as in the present case. I am *teres atque rotundus*, a microcosm in myself, my own author, public, critic, and posterity, and care for no other. But we abolitionists must get rid of a habit we have fallen into, of affirming all the geese who come to us from the magic circle of Respectability to be swans. I said so about Longfellow and I said so about myself. What does a man more than his simple duty in coming out for the truth? and if we exhaust our epithets of laudation at this stage of the business, what shall we do if the man turns out to be a real reformer, and does *more* than his duty? Besides, is it any sacrifice to be in the right? Has not being an abolitionist (as Emerson says of hell) its "infinite satisfactions" as well as those *infiniti guai* that Dante tells us of? To my mind

"All other pleasures are not worth its pains."

In the next place (turn back a page or two and you will find that I have laid down a "firstly"), if I have any vocation it is the making of verse. When I take my pen for that, the world opens itself ungrudgingly before me, everything seems clear and easy, as it seems sinking to the bottom would be as one leans over the edge of his boat in one of those dear coves at Fresh Pond. But, when I do prose, it is *invitâ Minerva*. I feel as if I were wasting time and keeping back my message, My true place is to serve the cause as a poet. Then my heart leaps on before me into the conflict. I write to

you frankly, as becomes one who is to be your fellow-worker. I wish you to understand clearly my capabilities, that you may not attribute that to lukewarmness or indolence which is truly but an obedience to my Demon. Thirdly (I believe it is thirdly), I have always been a very Quaker in following the Light and writing only when the spirit moved. This is a tower of strength which one must march out of in working for a weekly newspaper, and every man owes it to himself, so long as he does the duty which he sees, to remain here impregnably intrenched. Now, it seems to me that we contributors should write just enough to allow you this privilege—of only writing when the wind sets fair.

Having stated the poetical *cons*, I will now state the plain *pros* of the matter. I will help you as much as I can and ought. I had rather give the cause one good poem than a thousand indifferent prose articles. I mean to send all the poems I write (on whatever subject) first to the *Standard*, except such arrows as I may deem it better to shoot from the ambushment of the *Courier*,* because the old enemy offers me a fairer mark from that quarter. I will endeavor also to be of service to you in your literary selections.

I have told you what *I* expect to do. You must tell me in return what you expect me to do. I agree with you entirely in your notions as to the imprint and the initials. The paper must seem to be unanimous. Garrison is point-blank the other way. But his vocation has not been so much to feel the pulse of the public as

* The Boston *Courier*, an independent daily paper, edited by Mr. J. T. Buckingham.

to startle it into a quicker beat, and if we who make the paper can't settle it, who shall? I have one or two suggestions to make, but shall only hint at them, hoping to see you at Dedham on the 4th proxo. It seems to me eminently necessary that there should be an entire concert among us, and that, to this end, we should meet to exchange thoughts (those of us who are hereabout) and to wind each other up. We ought to know what each one's "beat" is, and what each is going to write.

Then, too, would it not be well to have a *Weekly Pasquil* (I do not call it *Punch*, to avoid confusion), in which squibs and facetiæ of one kind or other may be garnered up? I am sure I come across enough comical thoughts in a week to make up a good share of any such corner, and Briggs and yourself and Quincy could help.

You will find a squib of mine in this week's *Courier*.* I wish it to continue anonymous, for I wish Slavery to think it has as many enemies as possible. If I may judge from the number of persons who have asked me if I wrote it, I have struck the old hulk of the Public between wind and water. I suppose you will copy it, and, if so, I wish you would correct a misprint or two. Instead of

"To be cuttin' folk's throats,"

* The first of "The Biglow Papers," beginning,

"Thrash away, you'll hev to rattle
On them kittle-drums o' yourn,—
'Tain't a knowin' kind o' cattle
Thet is ketched with mouldy corn."

it should be . . "folks's" . ., which you see is necessary to the metre. I believe (for I have not any copy) that instead of "ring this message loudly" it is printed "*sing*"—please put in the right letter. Give our best regards to your wife, and believe me

Very truly your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

I shall send you a poem next week.

TO THE SAME

Stockbridge, Berkshire County, Mass.,
Aug. 4, 1846.

My dear Gay,—Here I am, quite domesticated among the mountains, and in the quietest little village I was ever in. I suppose Mammon is worshipped here also, but it is in an "upper chamber," as it were, and merely on holy days. He has not here the advantage of a "Sabbatical year," which, in the neighborhood of our metropolis, makes every day in the week equally set apart and private for his devotions.

I am afraid you will begin to think that my bowstring snapped in shooting the first arrow, though perhaps the force of the discharge may not give warrant for such a supposition. I send you some verses, with the understanding that I have better ones in store. I think the old proverb of putting the best foot foremost a fit subject for a new chapter in Browne's "Pseudodoxia."

We intend being in Cambridge again before September, and my address still continues to be at that ancient city.

I remain as ever your friend,

J. R. L.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 13, 1847.

My dear Friend,— . . . I do not know whether it is a common feeling or not, but I can never get to consider myself as anything more than a boy. My temperament is so youthful that whenever I am addressed (I mean by mere acquaintances) as if my opinion were worth anything, I can hardly help laughing. I cannot but think to myself with an inward laugh, "My good friend, you would be as mad as a hornet with me if you knew that I was only a boy of twelve behind a bearded vizor." This feeling is so strong that I have got into a way of looking on the Poet Lowell as an altogether different personage from myself, and feel a little offended when my friends confound the two. I find myself very curiously compounded of two utterly distinct characters. One half of me is clear mystic and enthusiast, and the other humorist. If I had lived as solitary as a hermit of the Thebais, I doubt not that I should have had as authentic interviews with the Evil One as they, and, without any disrespect to the saint, it would have taken very little to have made a St. Francis of me. Indeed, during that part of my life in which I lived most alone, I was never a single night unvisited by visions, and once I thought I had a personal revelation from God himself. I can believe perfectly in the sincerity of those who are commonly called religious impostors, for, at one time, a meteor could not fall, nor lightning flash, that I did not in some way connect it with my own interior life and destiny. On the other hand, had I mixed more with

the world than I have, I should probably have become a Pantagruelist.

I am perfectly conscious in myself (I may be allowed to say it to you) of finer powers than I have ever exercised or perhaps ever shall. The better qualities of my humor I have never shown except at home, and you would probably be astonished to find what an opinion of my wit obtains among my own family. This is one thing that draws me very strongly towards yourself. I think you have a vastly rarer humorous vein than you have ever put into your writings, and indeed than the majority of readers would appreciate. I mean that your power of humorous conception at present exceeds your artistic skill. I think that you have studied in other writers the humorous effect produced, rather than the how and the why. In the last chapter of "Tom Pepper"* I think the recipe Tom gives his sentimental friend for procuring an adventure is in the purest vein of humor. I feel that I cannot explain myself. What I wish you to study is (as the D.Ds. say of slavery) humor in the abstract. Perhaps I can explain what I mean by humor if I say (and I am sure you will agree with me in it) that Fielding has vastly more *conception of* humor than Dickens, and Dickens vastly more *observation* of humor than Fielding. Dickens seems to me for the most part to be rather a sketcher of humoristic characters (characters in themselves humorous and as such noted by him) than himself a humorist. My idea of the distinction between wit and humor is that wit makes oth-

* A story by Mr. Briggs, entitled "The Trippings of Tom Pepper, an Autobiography."

ers laugh, and humor ourselves cry sometimes. Waldo Emerson is an amusing instance of a (somebody has just interrupted me with a proof-sheet) man who is keenly alive to the incongruousness of *things*, but has no perception (or little) of ludicrous *ideas*. I will copy presently a few verses from my satire about Ellery Channing, which will explain what I mean.

As for Hosea, I am sorry that I began by making him such a detestable speller. There is no fun in bad spelling of itself, but only where the mis-spelling suggests something else which is droll *per se*. You see I am getting him out of it gradually. I mean to altogether. Parson Wilbur is about to propose a subscription for fitting him for college, and has already commenced his education. Perhaps you like the last best because it is more personal and has therefore more directness of purpose. But I confess I think that Birdofredom's attempt to explain the Anglo-Saxon theory is the best thing yet, except Parson Wilbur's letter in the *Courier* of last Saturday (to-day week). The only further use I shall put Hosea to will be to stir up the Legislater at the next session on the subject of allowing women to retain their own earnings, etc.

My satire* remains just as it was. About six hundred lines I think are written. I left it because I wished to finish it in one mood of mind, and not to get that and my serious poems in the new volume entangled. It is a rambling, disjointed affair, and I may alter the form of it, but if I can get it read I know it will take. I intend to give it some serial title and continue it at intervals.

* "The Fable for Critics."

I think my next volume will sell better than my others, for, as you say, Hosea has been a kind of advertisement. He, of course, has nothing to do with the book. He intends publishing a volume of his own before long. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Friday, 31 Dec., 1847.

My dear Friend,—I have not time left to say much more than Happy New Year! I have been hard at work copying my satire, that I might get it (what was finished of it, at least) to you by New-Year's Day as a present. As it is, I can only send the first part. It was all written with one impulse and was the work of not a great many hours, but it was written in good spirits (*con amore*, as Leupp said he used to smoke), and therefore seems to me to have a hearty and easy swing about it that is pleasant. But I was interrupted midway by being obliged to get ready the copy for my volume, and I have never been able to weld my present mood upon the old one without making an ugly swelling at the joint.

I wish you to understand that I make you a New-Year's gift, not of the manuscript, but of the thing itself. I wish you to get it printed (if you think the sale will warrant it) for your own benefit. At the same time I am desirous of retaining my copyright in order that, if circumstances render it desirable, I may still possess a control over it. Therefore, if you think it would repay publishing (*I* have no doubt of it, or I should not offer it to you) I wish you would enter the copyright in your own name, and then make a transfer to me in "consideration of," etc.

I am making as particular directions as if I were drawing my will, but I have a sort of presentiment (which I never had in regard to anything else) that this little bit of pleasantry will *take*. Perhaps I have said too much of the Centurion. But it was only the comicality of his *character* that attracted me—for the man himself personally never entered my head. But the sketch is clever?

I am going to indulge all my fun in a volume of H. Biglow's verses which I am preparing, and which I shall edit under the character of the Rev. Mr. Wilbur. I hope you saw Mr. B.'s last production, which I consider his best hitherto. I am going to include in the volume an essay of the reverend gentleman on the Yankee dialect, and on dialects in general, and on everything else, and also an attempt at a complete natural history of the Humbug—which I think I shall write in Latin. The book will purport to be published at Jaalam (Mr. B.'s native place), and will be printed on brownish paper with those little head and tail-pieces which used to adorn our earlier publications—such as hives, scrolls, urns, and the like.

I think my new volume an advance, though nothing like what my next will be. My pieces hamper me till I get them shut up in a book. Then I feel free of them and can do better. People are qualifying a rather unwilling recognition of me by talking of my *crudeness* and the want of polish in my versification. Now, I may be a bad poet (I don't mean to say I *think* that I am), but I *am* a good versifier. I write with far more ease in verse than in prose; I have studied the subject, and I

understand it from beginning to end. There is not a rough verse in my book that isn't intentional, and if my critics' ears were as good as they are long, they'd perceive it. I don't believe the man ever lived who put more *conscience* into his verses than I do. Good-bye. I want your opinion on what I have sent immediately. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Monday, Feb. 1, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Of course I am perfectly willing that you should use my name to the publisher. I could not help laughing as I read your proposed disposition of the expected finances. To look at you in the character of Alnaschar was something so novel as to be quite captivating to my imagination. Not that I have any fear that you will kick over the basket, but I am afraid the contents will hardly be so attractive to the public as to allow proceeds of the sale to be divided into three. It is really quite a triumph to be able to laugh at my practical friend. However, I will not impoverish your future, but will let you enjoy it as long as it lasts.

A visitor has just come in, and I must say what I have to say quickly. I have now, in addition to what I sent you, and exclusive of Emerson, etc., about a hundred lines written, chiefly about Willis and Longfellow. But, in your arrangements with the printer, you must reckon on allowing me at least a month. I cannot write unless in the mood, and I am taken up now with my review (it is on Browning), which I have to weigh well (in the critical part) and which I do not wish to be

duller than its predecessors. Bowen* seems to regard me as the wit of his *Review*, and I must keep up my character if I die for it.

The new poem† I spoke of is a sort of a story, and more likely to be popular than what I write generally. Maria thinks very highly of it. I shall probably publish it by itself next summer.

. . . Best love to Page. Thank you for your combined broadside. I love to have the kinder notices of me appear in such out-of-the-way places. It is the true way to begin at the bottom. I shall work up into the stupid quarterlies in good time. I liked the notice very much, but you know that I knew before what you two thought about me. I will try to deserve it all one of these days.

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, 1848.

. . . I, for one, came into the antislavery ranks after the chief burthen and heat of the day were over, and I would always bear in mind that excellent saying of old Fuller, that "there is more required to make one valiant than to call Cranmer and Jewell coward," as if the fire in Smithfield had been no hotter than what is painted in the Book of Martyrs. There is in this the unerring wisdom of a kind heart. Yet I would qualify it with another of the same author. "One may be a lamb in

* Professor Francis Bowen, then editor of the *North American Review*.

† "Sir Launfal."

private wrongs, but in hearing general affronts to goodness, they are asses which are not lions. . . ."

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, March 26, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Now about the "Fable." Since I sent you the first half, I have written something about Willis and about Longfellow—and I am waiting for pleasanter weather in order to finish it. I want to get my windows open and to write in the fresh air. I ought not to have sent you any part of it till I had finished it entirely. I feel a sense of responsibility which hinders my pen from running along as it ought in such a theme. I wish the last half to be as jolly and unconstrained as the first. If you had not praised what I sent you, I dare say you would have had the whole of it ere this. Praise is the only thing that can make me feel any doubt of myself. Those poor fellows who provoke you so by attacking me in the magazines are throwing away their time. They go the wrong way to work. Let them applaud, and it might keep me silent for a time. Saint Austin (or some other saint as good as he, I dare say) says, "*Laudari a bonis timeo, a malis detestor*," and there is more sense in the remark than one would have expected from any of the Fathers.

Meanwhile I have not been wholly idle. You will find an article of mine on Browning in the next *North American* in which there will be some things to make you laugh. The notice of Tennyson's "Princess" in the last *Massachusetts Quarterly* was mine. I expect to write an article on the "Conditions and Prospects of

American Poetry" in the July *N. A. R.*, and the Quarterly editors are anxious to have me give them something about W. S. Landor for their June number.

I have also engaged to write an article a week for the *Anti-Slavery Standard* for one year, and they are to pay me $500. I did not like to take pay for antislavery work, but as my abolitionism has cut me off from the most profitable sources of my literary emolument, as the offer was unsolicited on my part, and as I wanted the money, I thought I had a right to take it. I have spent more than my income every year since I have been married, and that only for necessities. If I can once get clear, I think I can keep so. I do not agree with the abolitionists in their disunion and non-voting theories. They treat ideas as ignorant persons do cherries. They think them unwholesome unless they are swallowed stones and all. Garrison is so used to standing alone that, like Daniel Boone, he moves away as the world creeps up to him, and goes farther *into the wilderness*. He considers every step a step forward, though it be over the edge of a precipice. But, with all his faults (and they are the faults of his position), he is a great and extraordinary man. His work may be over, but it has been a great work. Posterity will forget his hard words, and remember his hard work. I look upon him already as an historical personage, as one who is in his niche. You say it is a merit of Theodore Parker's letter that there is no "Garrisonism" in it. Why, it is full of Garrisonism from one end to the other. But for Garrison's seventeen years' toil, the book had never been written. I love you (and love includes respect); I respect Gar-

rison (respect does not include love). There never has been a leader of Reform who was not also a blackguard. Remember that Garrison was so long in a position where he alone was right and all the world wrong, that such a position has created in him a habit of mind which may remain, though circumstances have wholly changed. Indeed, a mind of that cast is essential to a Reformer. Luther was as infallible as any man that ever held St. Peter's keys. For the very reason that Garrison has done an injustice to you, I will not have you do one to him, because I love you. I have not read Garrison's article about the Howitts. But Sydney told me of it, and showed me your letter—which made me laugh. You shall hear from me about it in another way.

Now, I will tell you the three objects I had in writing my article in the next *North American Review*. First, I wished to say something about criticism; second, to do Browning a service; and third, to see you and Page. You do not see how this last has anything to do with it? Well, I shall get twenty odd dollars for the article on All-fools-day. This I shall set apart to pay the expenses of a visit to New York, which I shall set out upon as soon as I have finished the "Fable." I shall write to you so that you can have it printed, and I can read the proof-sheets when I come. As to your plan for dividing the profits, I will have nothing to do with it. I wish they might be a thousand dollars with all my heart, but I do not think that they will be more than enough to buy something for my little niece there in New York. If I had not thought it the only poem I ever wrote on which

there was like to be *some* immediate profit, I should never have given it to you at all. In making it a present to you, I was giving myself a *douceur*, and the greater the sale, the larger the bribe to myself. A part of the condition is that if it make a loss—I pay it. If this be not agreed to, the bargain is null, and I never will finish it. So no more about that, and do not think of me ever as J. R. L. the author, but simply as J. R. L. that loves you. I *will* have two or three quiet nooks into which I can retreat from the pursuit of my own title-pages. Let me be just the plain *man* to you, and forget that I ever took pen in hand except to write you a stupid letter. You are a great deal better than anything you write, and Page than anything he paints, and I always think of you without your pen, and of him without his brushes. If I did not think that I were better than my books, I should never dream of writing another. But I *do* dream of writing many, and such, too, as shall more fully express the real and whole me, and better justify the opinions of those who know me. You are a funny fellow, and I know you laugh at me sometimes, but you may laugh all day long if you will love me at the same time. It is an advantage to friendship that the friends should be as far apart as we are. The two minds cannot then rub together till they are smooth and can cling no longer except by atmospheric pressure from without—if that be what makes two smooth surfaces (plane, I mean) adhere.

Now that I *have* let you into the secret of the "Fable" before it was finished, I hope you will write and give me a spur. I suppose you did not wish to

say anything about it after it became yours. But I wish to be dunned. Tell me whether its being published at any particular time will make any difference, etc., etc., and make any suggestions. I think I shall say nothing about Margaret Fuller (though she offer so fair a target), because she has done me an ill-natured turn. I shall revenge myself amply upon her by writing better. She is a very foolish, conceited woman, who has got together a great deal of information, but not enough *knowledge* to save her from being ill-tempered. However, the temptation may be too strong for me. It certainly would have been if she had never said anything about me. Even Maria thinks I ought to give her a line or two.

Well, I only meant to say *salve et vale!* but here I am at the end of my fourth page. Forgive me this once more, and remember me always as your loving friend.

J. R. L.

I need send no love to W. P.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, 27th April, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I send you something of my friend Hosea,* which I have copied rather hastily from his somewhat obscure chirography. There was a note of his accompanying it which I have not time to copy. I will send it to-morrow. . . . You can take your choice between this and the other. Both will keep a week, I think. The other's the best, this the most taking. It

* "The Pious Editor's Creed."

is not so humorous as some of Hosea's productions, but it is by far the wittiest. Whichever you take for this week, the other must be delayed a fortnight, as I should rather have a prose article next. I may send some more stanzas when I send Hosea's introductory note.

Yours,
J. R. L.

Take care of pr*a*ying and pr*e*ying in fifth stanza.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Friday, May 5, 1848.

. . . Your beautiful specimen of engraving * came safely and satisfactorily to hand. Nothing could have been more opportune. I had just sent the last money I had in the world to Francis Jackson for the defence of the captives at Washington. I had three cents left. Seldom has the Pierian Spring afforded a more refreshing *draft*.

I have contrived to whittle out something this morning for you in time for the mail, though my head is so full of the Washington fugitives that I can hardly think of anything else, but so full that I cannot write about them with any satisfaction. You will see that Hosea has expressed some sentiments on the occasion in the *Courier*.† Had I thought of writing it soon enough I should have sent it to you. But it would not have kept so well for a fortnight. The one I sent you is better, though not so well adapted to the ears of the groundlings.

* A bank-note or banker's draft.
† "The Debate in the Sennit, sot to a Nusry Rhyme."

I am as glad as you are to be one in advance, and shall try to keep so. I shall probably send a poem next week. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, May 12, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . Here I am in my garret. I slept here when I was a little curly-headed boy, and used to see visions between me and the ceiling, and dream the so often recurring dream of having the earth put into my hand like an orange. In it I used to be shut up without a lamp—my mother saying that none of her children should be afraid of the dark—to hide my head under the pillows, and then not be able to shut out the shapeless monsters that thronged around me, minted in my brain. It is a pleasant room, facing, from the position of the house, almost equally towards the morning and the afternoon. In winter I can see the sunset, in summer I can see it only as it lights up the tall trunks of the English elms in front of the house, making them sometimes, when the sky behind them is lead-colored, seem of the most brilliant yellow. When the sun, towards setting, breaks out suddenly after a thunder-shower and I see them against an almost black sky, they have seemed of a most peculiar and dazzling green tint, like the rust on copper. In winter my view is a wide one, taking in a part of Boston. I can see one long curve of the Charles, and the wide fields between me and Cambridge, and the flat marshes beyond the river, smooth and silent with glittering snow. As the spring advances and one after another of our trees puts

forth, the landscape is cut off from me piece by piece, till, by the end of May, I am closeted in a cool and rustling privacy of leaves. Then I begin to bud with the season. Towards the close of winter I become thoroughly wearied of closed windows and fires. I feel dammed up, and yet there is not flow enough in me to gather any head of water. When I can sit at my open window and my friendly leaves hold their hands before my eyes to prevent their wandering to the landscape, I can sit down and write.

I have begun upon the "Fable" again fairly, and am making some headway. I think with what I sent you (which I believe was about 500 lines) it will make something over a thousand. I have done, since I sent the first half, Willis, Longfellow, Bryant, Miss Fuller, and Mrs. Child. In Longfellow's case I have attempted no characterization. The same (in a degree) may be said of S. M. F. With her I have been perfectly good-humored, but I have a fancy that what I say will stick uncomfortably. It will make you laugh. So will L. M. C. After S. M. F. I make a short digression on bores in general, which has some drollery in it. Willis I think good. Bryant is funny, and as fair as I could make it, immitigably just. Indeed I have endeavored to be so in all. I am glad I did Bryant before I got your letter. The only verses I shall add regarding him are some complimentary ones, which I left for a happier mood after I had written the comic part. *I* steal from him indeed! If he knew me he would not say so. When I steal I shall go to a specie-vault, not to a till. Does he think that he *invented* the Past and has a prescription title to

it?* Do not think I am provoked. I am simply amused. If he had *riled* me, I might have knocked him into a cocked hat in my satire. But that, on second thought, would be no revenge, for it might make him President, a cocked hat being now the chief qualification. It would be more severe to knock him into the middle of next week, as that is in the future, and he has such a partiality towards the past. However, enough of him. My next volume will be enough revenge, for it will be better than my last. . . .

I like a great many of your architectural notions extremely. They are characterized by that sound *sense* which, whatever people may prate of inspiration and what not, built the cathedrals and whatever noble buildings we have. But I think you have an unfounded prejudice against the Gothic. You think it absurd to bring back the architecture of a "Barbarous Age," as you call it. The age which produced those buildings was not barbarous. That which produces Trinity Church† *is*, because it is an abortion, because the conception of the edifice was never clear in the mind of the builder. The Gothic style is just as fit for a church (meeting-house) as ever; the difficulty is that The Church has shrunk so as not to fill her ancient idea. Gothic church-buildings are dark because they are no longer irradiated with the faith and piety which formerly lighted them up like Alloway Kirk. We shall never have a new architecture. The invention of printing destroyed the last hope of it. For-

* Bryant had written a poem with the same title as Lowell's, "To the Past."

† In New York.

merly a great Imagination strove to make itself durable in stone and mortar. Now it builds a securer monument with types and paper. Shakespeare might have invented a new order of architecture had he lived in the Middle Ages. Coming later, as he did, he invented a new order of poetry—for, let the mousers trace all the resemblances they will, it is entirely new in its idea. Building is the *play* of a younger and less self-conscious age. It is children who play with blocks and make card-houses. You are doubtless right when you say (as I have heard you) that *fitness* for its use is the test of a good building. That is, you are partly right. Fitness is a good thing, and, were buildings underground, would be the only thing. But a good building appeals not only to the sense of *constructiveness*, it should in some sort depend for its effect on its capability of satisfying all the qualities of the mind — or all the artistic ones, at least. Should Page draw his Ruth in simple outline, it would express his idea, but not *all* his idea nor all sides of it. He wishes also to delight the sense of color, of arrangement, etc. It seems to me that one leading fault of our architecture, as in that of new countries everywhere, is want of proportion. But we of necessity build so much and our people learn so quickly, that I cannot help looking for *good* architecture here, though I despair of *new*. I think that many of the granite warehouses in Boston (the ones lately built) are fine buildings. But there is an offensive parsimony in the use of ornament. For example, they put sometimes a hood (or whatever you call it) over the top of a window with no corresponding projection below, giving the effect of a person with a pro-

jecting upper jaw. Then, for the sake of your idol of fitness (*light* being the chief requisite where the basement story consists of shops), they support a heavy superstructure on slender iron pillars, and in this way produce buildings which I expect to tumble on me whenever I pass them. While our church-buildings are poor and jejune because our Church is dead, our ships, our railroad stations, and our shops are our best specimens of architecture because commerce, trade, and stocks are our religion. These are the temples we erect to Mammon, our God.

The next time you write will you give me the last line of that part of the "Fable" I sent you, and let it be soon? I wish to begin to copy the additions. The sooner you let me know, the sooner you will get the rest—so there is a bribe for you to write. . . .

I fear you will not find much to please you in my contributions to the *Standard*. It is not the place for me. It *fags* me to deal with particulars. The tendency of my mind is too reflective. I can interest myself in general ideas (such as include the particulars), but weary of their application to the present. The poems I send you will like. And yesterday I sent Sydney an imaginary conversation which I would have you read.* However, I have hardly got warm in the saddle yet, and, at any rate, I do not feel uncomfortable, for I told them frankly beforehand that I thought they made a mistake in engaging me. I do not know how I should have got through the year without the salary, though. I am

* "An Imaginary Conversation," in which the speakers were Mr. Calhoun, Mr. Foote, and General Cass.

afraid to sell the land we own, for fear I should in some way lose the proceeds, and it produces a very small income. One of my tenants I have just let off from his lease, because he thought he could do better with less land. This takes off about a sixth of my income. Another has not yet paid me a cent, and I cannot ask him for it, since it seems to me that the man who tills the land and makes it useful has a better right to it than he who has merely inherited it. But with my *Standard* salary I shall be rich, after I have paid a note which I gave for the stereotype plates of my last volume, and which will be due on the third of June. This will prevent my coming on till after that time, as I shall want every cent of money due me till then to pay it with. I hope to finish the "Fable" next week.

Your dear friend,
J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, May 12, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I send this week an *immense* deal of pork for a shilling. I suppose you will not have room for it next week, as the Annual Meeting will fill your paper. The note to yourself I wish you would insert in your Correspondence Department, when you find room.

As usual, I have just saved the mail, and have no time to say anything. I cannot come on till after the first week in June, as I have a note to pay on the 4th (for stereotyping my poems). Your remittance at the end of this month will oblige me as much as it did before. Without it, I shall have to borrow money. But perhaps your Congress have not ratified the doings of the Com-

mittee, and have turned me out? You will see by this week's grist that I have just got the *hang* of the treadmill.

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 19, 1848.

I send you another Hosea. I am rather stupid this morning, and don't know whether it's the thing or not. It's everlasting hot to-day. Don't print it at any rate till after the Conversation.

I have not seen this week's *Standard*, and do not know what you have printed.

I shall (if I am well) be in N. Y. the first or second week in June to a certainty, and then we can talk matters over.

Tell Briggs I have finished John Neal, Hawthorne, Cooper, *myself*, and something more, and that there will not be more than twelve hundred lines. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 8, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—The draft came just in time. I got it on the second and the note was due on the third.

I send something which you can either put in without any title or call it "Freedom," just as you please. There is something in it which I like.

Never before could I have thought that New York would have appeared to me in the light of a Fortunate Island. But it seems to recede before me. I thought to see you this week—but cannot come yet. I cannot

come without any money, and leave my wife with 62½ cents, such being the budget brought in by my secretary of the treasury this week. Tell Briggs that his ticket came safely, and that I am thankful therefor. I am expecting some money daily—I always am—I always have been, and yet have never been fairly out of debt since I entered college. But Providence will certainly turn an eye my way soon, and then I shall get to New York and see you all.

You never have made a single criticism yet. Not that I should not row you up—but then I might profit by them after that. I mean, you never have told me whether I send what the paper wants.

Good-by,
H. WILBUR.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 29, 1848.

. . . I send you something this week which has the benefit of my own approbation, as you will perceive by my having for the first time subjoined my initials.* Perhaps I give it too much credit. It is just written, and I am not far enough off from it yet to get a proper view. Don't let 'em print "a cross" *across* in the last verse. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Aug. 22, 1848.

. . . At length you have the whole [of the "Fable for Critics"]—that is, I hope so, for I have not heard yet whether you have found the first part or not. Let

*The poem "To Lamartine."

me know soon, and also whether I shall have a proof soon. . . .

I hope that while the "Fable" is going through the press you will make frankly every suggestion and criticism that occurs to you—and be as *minute* as you please. . . .

I cannot tell you now what a truly happy time I had in New York, only it was quite too short. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Sept. 2, 1848.

. . . We are all well, and I am as busy as I can be with Mr. Biglow's poems, of which I have got between twenty and thirty pages already printed. It is the hardest book to print that ever I had anything to do with, and, what with corrections and Mr. Wilbur's annotations, keeps me more employed than I care to be. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Sunday, Sept. 3, 1848.

My dear Friend,— . . . For your other gift, of "Keats's Life," I have other thanks to offer. It is a book that I have long desired to see. Indeed, I once meditated the raising of such a monument to him myself (it was in 1840), and, I think, had even gone so far as to write a letter to his brother George—which I never sent. Keats was a rare and great genius. He had, I think, the finest and richest fancy that has been seen since Shakespeare. And his imagination gave promise of an equal development. Ought we to sorrow for his

early death, or to be glad that we have in his works an eternal dawn of poesy, as in Shakespeare we have early morning and full day? Forever and forever shall we be able to bathe our temples in the cool dew which hangs upon his verse.

I love above all other reading the early letters of men of genius. In that struggling, hoping, confident time the world has not slipped in with its odious consciousness, its vulgar claim of confidantship, between them and their inspiration. In reading these letters I can recall my former self, full of an aspiration which had not learned how hard the hills of life are to climb, but thought rather to alight down upon them from its winged vantage-ground. Whose fulfilment has ever come nigh the glorious greatness of his yet never-balked youth? As we grow older, art becomes to us a definite faculty, instead of a boundless sense of power. Then we felt the wings burst from our shoulders; they were a gift and a triumph, and a bare flutter from twig to twig seemed aquiline to us; but now our vans, though broader grown and stronger, are matters of every day. We may reach our Promised Land; but it is far behind us in the Wilderness, in the early time of struggle, that we have left our Sinais and our personal talk with God in the bush. I think it fortunate to have dear friends far away. For not only does absence have something of the sanctifying privilege of death, but we dare speak in the little closet of a letter what we should not have the face to at the corner of the street, and the more of our confidence we give to another, the more are we ourselves enlarged. It is good also, on another account, to

pour ourselves out, for it gives room for other thoughts to be poured in. The mind and the heart must have this outlet or they would stagnate.

Something which I have said about "Keats's Life" reminds me of some verses which I wrote in 1839, and which I saved from a pretty general incremation of old lumber a few weeks ago. You will like to read them.

Sometimes the simplest word,
Though often heard
And heeded not,
The shadow of a bird
Flashing across a sunny spot,
A breath of air,
A bullock's low,
A smell of flowers,
Hath power to call from everywhere
The spirits of forgotten hours;
Hours when the heart was fresh and young,
When every string in freedom rung,
Ere life had shed one leaf of green,
And the cold earth had come between
The spirit and its right,
Blotting with a dull eclipse
The heavenly light
That gave a glory to the sight
And words of wonder to the sinless lips.

* * * * *

O glorious power!
O daily second birth!
Who the most lowly wayside flower
Canst clothe with might to make anew our earth,
And by a pebble small
Canst give us back our childhood's dower,
Break custom's freezing thrall
And to the wilted soul its lusty spring recall.

Here my balloon comes plump against *terra firma* again, and I am dragged about among squash and potato-vines and other such prosaic commodities—for I am reminded of the proof-sheets you sent me. I wish to keep them two or three days, and will leave all I have to say till I send them back. I only got them yesterday evening.

I am much overrun with proofs, as Bishop Hatto was with rats, and sometimes feel almost inclined to swear that I will never write anything again. I made such a resolve at the beginning of the summer, and here I am correcting the press for an anonymous satirist and for Mr. Hosea Biglow (no easy task to perform properly), and writing notes which I have no question that unscrupulous priest, Parson Wilbur, will palm upon the public for his own. Besides this I expect to print that other little narrative poem of "Sir Launfal," of which I spoke, and of which Page shall have his copy as soon as I have time. . . .

Your loving friend,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Sept., 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I suppose your readers will like a poem by way of variety—although I feel as if I were cheating you because it will not fill up so well as a proser would. The truth is, that I am so wearied out with Mr. Biglow and his tiresome (though wholly re spectable) friend Mr. Wilbur, that I was obliged to "search my coffers round" for some sort of a tub to throw to you. This having to do with printers is dreadful business. There was a Mr. Melville who, I believe, enjoyed it, but, for my part, I am heartily sick of *Typee*.

When I get through with this job I shall devote more time to the *Standard*. The truth is that our position is so purely *destructive* that one must look at everything from a point of *criticism* which is wearisome. However, I warned you beforehand that I should not be worth my salt, and stipulated that the Society should be free to dismiss me whenever they got tired of me. It has been a good thing for me, for it has enabled me to get out of debt. I have got now money enough in the bank to pay my taxes, and five dollars in my pocket. Crœsus was no richer. . . .

Affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Saturday, Oct., 1848.

My dear Sydney,—In future I will go into the *Standard* with my coat off. I expect to be free of Hosea in two days more. I should have sent this yesterday, but it was not written, and I was working like a dog all day, preparing a glossary and an *index*.* If I ever make another glossary or index—! . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Wednesday, Oct. 4, 1848.

My dear Friend,—If it be not too late, strike out these four verses in "Miranda":

> There is one thing she owns in her own private right,
> It is native and genuine—namely her spite;

* To "The Biglow Papers."

When she acts as a censor, she privately blows
A censer of vanity, 'neath her own nose.

Also, if the note on pronunciation of Cowper's name be printed as prose, see that the rest are done in the same manner. I have not meddled with them in the proof, because I did not know about the other.

I send half the proof to-day—t'other to-morrow with Irving and Judd. I am *druv like all possessed.* I am keeping up with the printers with Wilbur's notes, glossary, index, and introduction. I have two sets of hands to satiate—one on the body of book, one on the extremities. I wish to see title-page and preface. . . .

More to-morrow.

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Saturday, Nov., 1848.

. . . Hosea is done with and will soon be out. It made fifty pages more than I expected and so took longer. I never found it so hard to write my *quota* for the *Standard.* I wish to *loaf.* . . .

TO THE SAME

Nov. 10, 1848.

. . . I shall send you a copy of Hosea in next week's *Liberator* bundle. It will be out, I suppose, to-day. So we are going to have Taylor * after all. Tell Briggs that I had not so much faith in the brutality of the people as he had. I suppose we shall have another cursed Missouri Compromise. . . .

* General Zachary Taylor, nominated for the Presidency.

TO THE SAME

Nov. 25, 1848.

. . . The first edition of Hosea is nearly exhausted already, and "Sir Launfal" is printed, and will be out in a week or so. . . .

TO THE SAME

Friday Morning, Dec. 1, 1848.

. . . Last night, just as I was sitting down (after the labors of Thanksgiving) to write my weekly allowance, a fire broke out in Cambridge and drew me down to the village, where I stayed till I saw the last of Willard's huge stables. I thought, as I came home between eleven and twelve, that I should be behindhand again this week; but this morning grace has been granted me to write the foregoing parable * in just two hours, and I have saved my bacon. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Dec. 20, 1848.

My dear Sydney,—I intended, when I sent my last *quota*, to write to you next day; but one of the many lions which haunt letter-writers got in my path, and the fulfilment of my design has been put off till to-day, when all that I had to say has pretty much evaporated.

I was amazingly tickled with your letter. As Wendell Holmes said to me about the "Biglow Papers," "it made me wriggle all over." If it could only be printed in

* The poem entitled "A Parable," which begins, "Said Christ our Lord, 'I will go and see.'"

the *Standard*, it would be universally hailed as the best thing that ever was in it. . . .

I told you and the Executive Committee honestly before I began that they were setting me about a business for which I was not fitted. I feel as if the whole of them were looking over my shoulder whenever I sit down to write, and it quite paralyzes me. Here they are, like so many Californian immigrants, raking and sifting and pickaxing and hoeing and shovelling and dredging and scratching (and, I fear, damning) my brains, and getting nothing but iron pyrites after all. The first Horsford* that tests me will find me out, and the game will be up. Only when I send you a poem I feel as if I were making some sort of restitution. I have sent you some of which neither you nor I need be ashamed. I am afraid to think of what I gave them for the *Liberty Bell*. I half-parodied it to myself as I went along, of which the following is a sufficient specimen, and will make you laugh when you see the original:

> "By God's just judgment I am damned!"
> With a loud voice he cried,
> And then his coffin-lid he slammed,
> And bolted it inside.

As for your articles being fathered upon me, I am glad to hear it, and, if we ever quarrel, I shall hope that you will keep forgetting to put my initials after mine. Your notice of the "Biglow Papers" was the best one they have had. More than that, however, it was good

* Professor of chemistry.

in itself. It was rather a ticklish job to notice them at all, and something like stroking a hedgehog, after I had fenced them round so with preliminary notices. As a general thing (I must confess) the notices have *not* been favorable. But I am quite satisfied with seeing the feathers fly. The first edition (1500) were all gone in a week—so that the book was actually out of print before a second edition could be struck off from the plates. If the relative positions of author and publisher were established on a proper footing, I ought to have cleared at least $400 by these two editions. As it is, I shall make $250, from which something like $200 will be deducted to pay for my stereotype plates. This, however, will also cover the printing of "Sir Launfal," which was published Monday. (Don't think from the staggering look of my handwriting that I have taken to eating opium. I strike out three hundred strokes with a pair of 24-lb. dumb-bells every morning and evening, and my hand generally trembles for an hour or two after.)

Your notice of the "Fable" was the best one I have seen. I believe there are not above half a dozen persons who know how good it is, and you and I make two out of these six. I think I shall write something yet that will make us laugh. As for the "Fable," I speak of it as it appeared to me when it was first written. It seems bald and poor enough now, the Lord knows. But Briggs must give you a copy of the second edition, in which the atrocious misprints of the other will be corrected, and to which I have prefixed a new preface.

. . . By all means bring your boy up a non-resistant, my dear Sydney, if you wish to retain any authority over him. Teach him to heap coals of fire on your head by passive obedience, and get him early accustomed to the birch. Cut down all the ailanthi and plant birch-trees. It will pay in the end. The ailanthus is brittle and of no practical efficacy. Depend upon it, children have gone so far in this generation that they will be breeching their fathers in the next, unless vigorous and early measures be taken.

Affectionately yours,
J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Dec. 22, 1848.

. . . I send something this week rather alien (in appearance) to your denouncing and excoriating columns, but which has, nevertheless, its appropriateness. Console yourself that it has found out something new to abuse, and be thankful that the circle of philanthropy is enlarging. Next week I expect to send verses.

I shall send you "Sir Launfal" in a day or two. I could not get copies enough yesterday. To-day our first winter has set in with a tremendous north-easterly snow-storm. It is Forefathers' Day, you remember.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Saturday Morning.

. . . I open my letter to send you the enclosed article which I wrote "whether or no," thinking you might be short of copy. If I find the package doesn't weigh too much, I shall enclose also two articles from the *Daily*

News, in which I have corrected a misprint or two. I wish you to be neighborly and let me know what you are most in want of, and I will supply it if possible. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Friday Morning, Dec., 1848.

My dear Friend,—Last night . . . I walked to Watertown over the snow with the new moon before me and a sky exactly like that in Page's evening landscape. Orion was rising behind me, and, as I stood on the hill just before you enter the village, the stillness of the fields around me was delicious, broken only by the tinkle of a little brook which runs too swiftly for Frost to catch it. My picture of the brook in "Sir Launfal" was drawn from it. But why do I send you this description—like the bones of a chicken I had picked? Simply because I was so happy as I stood there, and felt so sure of doing something that would justify my friends. But why do I not say that I *have* done something? I believe that I have done better than the world knows yet, but the past seems so little compared with the future. . . . I am the first poet who has endeavored to express the American Idea, and I shall be popular by and by. Only I suppose I must be dead first. But I do not want anything more than I have. Never had poet better friends, and never poet loved them better. . . .

If you ever see Bartlett, the Americanisms man, I wish you would tell him that I made a good many notes in reading his book, which shall be at his service

for a second edition if he likes. I know *Yankee*, if I know nothing else.

I shall write you a letter next week.

God bless you,
J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Friday, Jan. 5, 1849.

. . . Don't you like the poem * I sent you last week? I was inclined to think pretty well of it, but I have not seen it in print yet. The little mill stands in a valley between one of the spurs of Wellington Hill and the main summit, just on the edge of Waltham. It is surely one of the loveliest spots in the world. It is one of my lions, and if you will make me a visit this spring I will take you up to hear it roar, and I will show you "the oaks"—the largest, I fancy, left in the country. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Feb. 26, 1849.

. . . It was not because I had taken a miff that I did not subjoin any private communication to the last few weekly sheets for the *Standard*, but simply because I had just time to save the mail, which closes at the inconvenient hour of 1 o'clock. My own house has too many vitreous points about it to allow me to think of throwing any stones.

If ever letter deserved the name of providential raven it was your last. Not for its blackness, nor for any the least unpleasantness in its note, but for the supply it

* "Beaver Brook."

brought to a famishing man. Though I am now a middle-aged man, having accomplished my thirtieth year on the 22d of this month, my constitution is still vigorous enough to be able to bear a draft. I think I could sit exposed to such as yours all day long without taking cold.

The truth is, that I have just been able to keep my head above water; but there is a hole in my life-preserver, and what wind I can raise from your quarter generally comes just in season to make up for leakage and save me from total submersion. Since the day after I received your remittance for December I have literally not had a copper, except a small sum which I borrowed. It was all spent before I got it. So is all the last one, too. As long as I have money I don't think anything about it, except to fancy my present stock inexhaustible and capable of buying up the world; but when I have it not, I entertain lawless and uncertain thoughts. I question those fallacious distinctions of *meum* and *tuum* which lie at the foundation of all right of property in the present social state. I become ferociously radical, and look upon Abbott Lawrence with communistic eyes. My dear friend, if you would keep alive in me those fine feelings of superiority which belong to and characterize the gentleman, send your next draft without delay.

It is entirely my own fault that I am always in straits. I might have had $250 in my pocket at this minute from the sale of my last two books. But I had already taken up near $100 in cash and books, and my bill for stereotyping (which I pay myself) is $225. There were

a great many alterations of spelling made in the plates of the "Biglow Papers," which added much to the expense. I ought not to have stereotyped at all. But we are never done with cutting eye-teeth. When I reflect on the dangers incident to dentition, and the incredible number of those teeth I have cut, I wonder that I am alive at this minute. It is no wonder, with such a supply of canines, that I should have become carnivorous again. Should not I be a terrible fellow if I became hydrophobic? This is a temperance consideration that never before occurred to me.

Don't be getting up a subscription for my relief, however, for I shall be easy enough in good time. I can get along without money as well as any man I ever heard of. Indeed, were it not for the recurrence of the 1st of January, and a foolish curiosity which infests tradesmen at that season in regard to one's solvency, I should never have any trouble. My great happiness is that I married Maria; my great unhappiness, that I married the daughter of the late A. White, Esq. I cannot shake off the imputation of being rich. This is the ruin of me. I am positively beflead with runaway slaves who wish to buy their wives. They cut and come again. I have begun to fancy that polygamy is not unusual among them. What can I do? We, in principle, deny the right of compensation. But if a man comes and asks us to help him buy a wife or child, what are we to do? I cannot stand such an appeal. So, when I have money I give something; when I have none I subscribe, to be paid when I have. And I never can tell whether they are speaking truth or not. There is a fellow in

Cambridge who blacks boots, etc., for students, who in vacation takes up the profession of runaway (at least he has once), and raises money to buy imaginary (or at least superfluous, for he has one in Cambridge) wives, and children yet unborn and unbegotten even. On the whole, these things heighten one's zeal against slavery.

I will macerate myself. I will keep *lent*, so that I may never more be under the necessity of borrowing. I have a whoreson appearance of health and good spirits which infects men with a false opinion of my prosperity. They will have me rich. I say I have no money, and they smile with respectful incredulity. Unfortunately it is not my temper to reap any satisfaction from this imputed righteousness. Perhaps I should bear riches with resignation. I think few of us would hold an umbrella (at any rate right side up) against a golden shower. But, not to mention *tin*, I have not *brass* enough to be rich. A consciousness of external superiority to other men is painful to me. I never could ride in a two-horse coach with any comfort. I am afraid to meet the eyes of passers-by. I know they detect me as an impostor at once. On the other hand, I drive my father's venerable "September" (my senior by several years) with entire satisfaction. I am certain to be rather pitied than envied even by the shabbiest pedestrians. How shall I escape this odious accusation of wealth? I am certain that I am suspected of being miserly by the very fellow to whom, perhaps, I have given my last cent, and whose greasy, corpulent pocket-book almost makes a Eugene Aram of me. It is this that has made me feel uncomfortably in being paid by the Anti-Slavery

Society, though my receipts from that source are all that have enabled me to keep Maria's property entire, which I am resolved to do at all events. . . .

As ever, affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, March 9, 1849.

. . . Your remittance came most seasonably, but I hope that you did not pinch yourself for it. I take it that you need money more than I do—for I have no rent to pay. I suppose my letter was more desponding than it should have been. I am not very often down in the mouth; but sometimes, at the end of a year, when I have done a tolerable share of work and have nothing to show for it, I feel as if I had rather be a spruce clerk on India Wharf than a man of letters. Regularly I look forward to New Year and think that I shall begin the next January out of debt, and as regularly I am disappointed. However, it stirs one up, and I am going to work hard this spring. . . .

We are as well as could be expected, considering that a skunk was shot in our back-kitchen this morning. There were two of these "essence-pedlers," as the Yankees call them, gambolling there the night before. . . .

TO THE SAME

MAY DAY, [1849?]

Move eastward, Sydney Gay, and leave
Each damp exchange untorn apart;
Brush off such tear-drops with your sleeve,
O Sydney Gay, as needs must start;

To Boston east; then west until
You see the Charles obscure with grit
Washed from the dreary gravel-pit,
The gravel-pit of Simon's Hill.

Still west to where the pine and elm
And other trees (of choicest kinds)
With a leaf-deluge half o'erwhelm
A yellowish house with dark-green blinds;
There at the ponderous knocker bang
Until the baby 'gins to roar,
Then find the bell, unseen before,
And bid the useless bronze go hang.

Soon through the entry you will hear
The tramp as of a hippopot-
amus, and Biddy, blundering-hot,
Tries the huge lock at front and rear;
She, failing in her wild desire,
Back through the hall her thunder rolls
And Mary calls, and both (poor souls!)
At bolt and lock in vain perspire.

Meanwhile you, waiting, mutter "Zounds!"
And Lizzie on the step sinks down;
The baby gains a hundred pounds,
And you feel aches from sole to crown;
Then, like a charging troop of horse,
Comes Bridget rumbling down the stairs,
Adds all her Irish skill to theirs,
And makes the matter ten times worse.

In attic high beneath the roof
A handsome youth with Vandyke hair
And beard (the *Standard* is my proof)
Hears far below the loud despair;

Descending, he those hussies three
Bids instantly to go to pot,
Swiftly cuts through the Gordian knot,
And makes the rescued entrance free.

"Sydney, my boy, and is it you?
And, Lizzie, can I trust my eyes?
That prodigy of babies too?
Come in, come in at once," he cries:
"Take off your things, and feel at home."
Then to himself: "The merest dab!
Incredible that they should come
To match that child with marvellous Mab!"

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 21, 1849.

My dear Sydney,—You give me credit for too much temper or too little philosophy. I am truly sorry that you should have felt any uneasiness on my account. Look at it simply as a matter of money—not of feeling. I lose two hundred and fifty dollars a year, but I think it will be all the better for me, since I shall be obliged to work in some other way to supply the *hiatus*. Besides, I had, with a most preternatural foresight (and thereto inspired, I must believe, by my Demon), already bought a ream of ruled foolscap and a bunch of quills (with one of which I now, to my own great satisfaction, am writing), so that you see my literary garrison is provisioned and ammunitioned for a long siege. Ravens, my dear Sydney, of one sort or another, will be sent before the year is out, I am certain. As for the Executive Committee, shall I cry out against them as against another Jerusalem that has made away with half my

profits? I am somewhat philosophical, very good-natured, and know my own limits with tolerable exactness (I am not concerned in this place to catalogue my faults, of which, also, one's friends commonly need no enumeration), so that I am sufficiently well bucklered against a wound in that immedicable part—Vanity.

All through the year I have felt that I worked under a disadvantage. I have missed that inspiration (or call it magnetism) which flows into one from a thoroughly sympathetic audience. Properly speaking, I have never had it as an author, for I have never been popular. But then I have never needed it, because I wrote to please myself and not to please the people; whereas, in writing for the *Standard*, I have felt that I ought in some degree to admit the whole Executive Committee into my workshop, and defer as much as possible to the opinion of persons whose opinion (however valuable on a point of morals) would not properly weigh a pin with me on an æsthetic question. I have felt that I ought to work in my own way, and yet I have also felt that I ought to *try* to work in *their* way, so that I have failed of working in either. Nevertheless, I think that the Executive Committee would have found it hard to get some two or three of the poems I have furnished from any other quarter.

When it was first proposed to me, I felt uncomfortable at the thought of accepting a salary. Hitherto, if I had served at the altar of Freedom, it was as one who brought an offering, not as one of the priests who fed upon the offerings of others. But it is always too easy to reconcile ourselves to that which increases our com-

fort, and I thought, moreover, that I had in some sort a right to that priestly style of aliment, since I should not have needed it had I written hymns to Baal instead of to the one God. I do not say it as a matter of merit, but surely I might have been a popular and thriving author could I have consented to be a little less *myself*.

I do not measure myself with any man, but I said (you remember) at first that Edmund Quincy would answer their purpose better than I. I also said that I wished them to put an end to their engagement with me as soon as they wished or found it convenient. How then can I feel offended in any the slightest degree? I do not blame Foster or Philbrick or Jackson for not being satisfied with me; but, on the other hand, I thank God that he has gradually taught me to be quite satisfied with *them*. The longer I live the more convinced am I that we must (in our mental cabinet of natural history) enlarge the *genera* of our *species Homo*. I am willing to accept all kinds of men, even wicked ones among the rest (but do not tell this to the Executive Committee or you will ruin me), and to think that Zachary Taylors are no more out of the order of nature than Henry C. Wrights are.

I think Foster is employed in his proper calling, though perhaps he would be less zealous in it if he read the lessons of history with a clearer eye. All men are not George Foxes, nor, indeed, is it possible that there should ever be a second. I say I think Foster properly enough employed, but I lament to see so exuberant an activity and so hearty and robust an intelligence as that of Pillsbury thrown away. Why do such

men forget that we are not Hebrews, nor live in Judea, nor have Edomites and Philistines on our borders, nor are watching fearfully the growth of Egypt on the one hand and of Assyria on the other? It appears to me that the Hebrew prophets have narrowed all the prophets since. The American prophet must be a very different sort of person. And Wendell Phillips, too, born and gifted with all the physical requisites for a politician—a ποιμήν λαῶν—why does he throw away his crook and dream of nonconformists and Hampdens nowadays?

You know that I never agreed to the Dissolution-of-the-Union movement, and simply because I think it a waste of strength. Why do we not separate ourselves from the African whom we wish to elevate? from the drunkard? from the ignorant? At this minute the song of the bobolink comes rippling through my open window and preaches peace. Two months ago the same missionary was in his South Carolina pulpit, and can I think that he chose another text or delivered another sermon there? Hath not a slaveholder hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions? fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same summer and winter as an abolitionist is? If you prick them do they not bleed? If you tickle them do they not laugh? If you poison them do they not die? If you wrong them shall they not revenge? Nay, I will go a step farther, and ask if all this do not apply to parsons also? Even *they* are human.

The longer I live the more am I convinced that the world must be healed by degrees. I see why Jesus

came eating meat and drinking wine and companying with publicans and sinners. He preached the highest doctrine, but he lived the life of other men. And was it not in order that his personality might be a bridge between their lower natures and his higher ideas? Let us sow the best seed we have, my dear Sydney, and convert other men by our crops, not by drubbing them with our hoes or putting them under our harrows. Above all, let us not *preach* about the bright side of human nature and *look* always at the dark. Heaven help us! we all revolve around God with larger or lesser orbits, but we all likewise turn upon our own axes, and sometimes one half of us is in the light, sometimes the other. I have felt as if I were *all* black sometimes, but it was only because my diseased consciousness had absconded into my æsthetic hemisphere.

Well, I have been defining my position, perhaps more to my own satisfaction than to yours, but I will release you presently. This quill-pen runs over the paper so glibly that it is a pleasure to write with it—especially when one is talking about one's self.

I feel that I am called on to do one thing more. I wish to release the Executive Committee from all fetters of delicacy, and accordingly I throw up our engagement altogether. Let them feel no scruple about any offence that *I* am likely to take. So much I think is due to my own independence—or call it pride if you will. But now, on the other hand, I owe something to my *dependence* also. A tremor runs through my Penates. If the Executive Committee *wish* me to write once a fortnight, I am willing to do it. But if they only make

that proposal to break my fall, I should choose to decline it. . . .

I should be sorry to see the *Standard* hauled down, and chiefly on your account, my dear Sydney, and Lizzie's, and the young Campeador's. You have edited the paper excellently. A little hot, now and then, but wonderfully little mustard, considering the palates you were dressing your salads for. If they do not appreciate you the fault is theirs, not yours. But, at any rate, in five years one strikes down a good many roots. It would be hard for you to be pulled up; harder, perhaps, to take root again elsewhere, and accordingly I hope that the *Standard* will wave on its present editorial staff for many years longer. I should have preferred that the $250 should have gone to you, and, indeed, I had all along entertained a fancy that, in case my income were increased from any other quarter, I would surrender half on condition that it should go to the resident editor. Never mind. There is more than one kind of benevolence. There are some men who never put their hands in their pockets, who yet give away a great deal in their faces and manners. And if the drunkenness of wine brings out the true wish and motive of the heart, shall not the intoxication of reverie do the same?

I do not know what I have written, but I will end by copying some verses intended for an editor who continually put my poems in his paper and underrated me.

I did not bid you to my board,
  But you were welcome with the rest.
All that my poor house could afford
  I gave you freely, gave my best.

You tasted this and smelt of that
And growled and wished you had not come,
Yet stuffed into your greasy hat
Enough to feed the weans at home.

A beaker full of nectar clear
I brimmed for you; you drank it up,
And "Does he mean to call *this* beer?"
You muttered, belching in your cup.

When next you chance to pass my way,
Good friend, your dainty palate spare.
"My cookery likes you not," you say,
Nor me your manners; we are square.

Now, I don't mean to apply this to the Executive Committee, though I was reminded of it and copied it (I have carried it in my head hitherto and never wrote it before) to fill my sheet. But the antislavery folks have certainly had the use of my pen in more ways than one, and they must not grumble at the way I hold it.

Nevertheless, if they wish to have me continue to write once a fortnight, I will try to do better than hitherto. That is, I will think less of them and let myself *go*, and not keep reining up for fear of this or that one's fence.

Love to Lizzie, and believe me as ever

Affectionately yours,
J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

June, 1849.

I had written about twice as much, but I send the best. The thermometer has been for three days at 98°, and what can a man do, especially in haying? This

morning I was pitching hay before you were up, and day before yesterday I pitched "risin' o' teu (two) ton" in a hot sun (thermometer 86° in the shade). I tell you what, "intellectual labor," as the parsons call it, is too much. I suppose you cannot help estimating quality *somewhat* by quantity; I should in your place with as many columns to fill, and that is the reason I always apologize for anything short, though it may be all the better for it. . . .

TO CHARLES R. LOWELL*

Elmwood, June 11, 1849.

My dear Charlie,—I have had so much to do in the way of writing during the past week that I have not had time sooner to answer your letter, which came to me in due course of mail, and for which I am much obliged to you.

I am very glad to hear that you are enjoying yourself so much, and also that the poor musquash dug faster than you did. I was not so long ago a boy as not to remember what sincere satisfaction there is in a good ducking, and how the spirit of maritime adventure is

* Born in 1834, died Oct. 20, 1864, of wounds received the previous day at the battle of Cedar Creek. Of him General Sheridan said, "He was the perfection of a man and a soldier." It was of him that his uncle wrote, in *The Biglow Papers*,

> "Wut's words to them whose faith an' truth
> On War's red techstone rang true metal,
> Who ventered life an' love an' youth
> Fur the gret prize o' death in battle?
> To him who, deadly hurt, agin
> Flashed on afore the charge's thunder,
> Tippin' with fire the bolt of men
> That rived the Rebel line asunder."

ministered to by a raft which will not float. I congratulate you on both experiences.

And now let me assume the privilege of my uncleship to give you a little advice. Let me counsel you to make use of all your visits to the country as opportunities for an education which is of great importance, which town-bred boys are commonly lacking in, and which can never be so cheaply acquired as in boyhood. Remember that a man is valuable in our day for what he *knows*, and that his company will always be desired by others in exact proportion to the amount of intelligence and instruction he brings with him. I assure you that one of the earliest pieces of definite knowledge we acquire after we have become men is this—that our company will be desired no longer than we honestly pay our proper share in the general reckoning of mutual entertainment. A man who knows more than another knows *incalculably* more, be sure of that, and a person with eyes in his head cannot look even into a pigsty without learning something that will be useful to him at one time or another. Not that we should educate ourselves for the mere selfish sake of that advantage of superiority which it will give us. But knowledge is power in this noblest sense, that it enables us to *benefit* others and to pay our way honorably in life by being of *use*.

Now, when you are at school in Boston you are furnishing your brain with what can be obtained from books. You are training and enriching your intellect. While you are in the country you should remember that you are in the great school of the senses. Train

your eyes and ears. Learn to know all the trees by their bark and leaves, by their general shape and manner of growth. Sometimes you can be able to say positively what a tree is *not* by simply examining the lichens on the bark, for you will find that particular varieties of lichen love particular trees. Learn also to know all the birds by sight, by their notes, by their manner of flying; all the animals by their general appearance and gait or the localities they frequent.

You would be ashamed not to know the name and use of every piece of furniture in the house, and we ought to be as familiar with every object in the world —which is only a larger kind of house. You recollect the pretty story of Pizarro and the Peruvian Inca: how the Inca asked one of the Spaniards to write the word *Dios* (God) upon his thumb-nail, and then, showing it to the rest, found only Pizarro unable to read it! Well, you will find as you grow older that this same name of God is written all over the world in little phenomena that occur under our eyes every moment, and I confess that I feel very much inclined to hang my head with Pizarro when I cannot translate these hieroglyphics into my own vernacular.

Now, I write all this to you, my dear Charlie, not in the least because it is considered proper for uncles to bore their nephews with musty moralities and advice; but I should be quite willing that you should think me a bore, if I could only be the means of impressing upon you the importance of *observing*, and the great fact that we cannot properly observe till we have learned *how*. Education, practice, and especially a determination not to

be satisfied with remarking that side of an object which happens to catch our eye first when we first see it—these gradually make an observer. The faculty, once acquired, becomes at length another sense which works mechanically.

I think I have sometimes noticed in you an *impatience* of mind which you should guard against carefully. Pin this maxim up in your memory—that Nature abhors the credit system, and that we never get anything in life till we have paid for it. Anything good, I mean; evil things we always pay for afterwards, and always when we find it hardest to do it. By paying for them, of course, I mean *laboring* for them. Tell me how much good solid *work* a young man has in him, and I will erect a horoscope for him as accurate as Guy Mannering's for young Bertram. Talents are absolutely nothing to a man except he have the faculty of work along with them. They, in fact, turn upon him and worry him, as Actæon's dogs did—you remember the story? Patience and perseverance—these are the sails and the rudder even of genius, without which it is only a wretched hulk upon the waters.

It is not fair to look a gift horse in the mouth, unless, indeed, it be a wooden horse, like that which carried the Greeks into Troy; but my lecture on patience and *finish* was apropos of your letter, which was more careless in its chirography and (here and there) in its composition than I liked. Always make a thing as good as you can. Otherwise it was an excellent letter, because it told what you had seen and what you were doing —certainly better as a *letter* than this of mine, which is

rather a sermon. But read it, my dear Charlie, as the advice of one who takes a sincere interest in you. I hope to hear from you again, and my answer to your next shall be more entertaining.

I remain your loving uncle,

J. R. Lowell.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Oct. 14, 1849.

My dear Sir,— . . . The reason I did not sooner answer your first note was, that I have an unfortunate unconsciousness of the lapse of time. I believe that I was born after my seasonable date, and that I was meant for an Antediluvian, for a month seems no more to me than the while between getting up and breakfast. I had a notion of writing something new for your "Book," * and kept turning over in my head an essay upon Commencement as it used to be, till—behold, October!

As for "The First Client," I have read it over, and I confess it seems to me pretty poor stuff. I think something more creditable to me as a moral and intellectual being (as Dr. Ware used to say) might be selected.

Why can't you come out some afternoon and spend an evening with me? Say Monday. If you find it dull, you can escape in the omnibus, or, if you please, I can give you a bed and you can have a country morning before you are bricked up again in Boston.

* Mr. Fields was editing "The Boston Book," made up of a selection from the writings of Boston authors. "The First Client" was the name of a short story by Lowell, published originally in 1842, in the *Boston Miscellany*.

We can talk over that and other matters by the light of a cigar. I will be at home Monday, at any rate, and you would be pretty sure to find me any afternoon but Wednesday.

I remain very sincerely (and dilatorily)
Your friend,
J. R. Lowell.

TO MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1849.

. . . I am glad you like my poems. I wish I did—that is, I wish they were better. And I think they will be one of these days when I have written better ones to cast back an enlightening glow on the old. But I am not flattered by your liking. You like them because Page does, and, between ourselves, that is his weakest point, as you, I see, with your woman's wit have discovered. Page is wiser than you, and likes them because he knows I am better than they, which you do not. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1849.

. . . My new edition will be out about the 10th of December, and I think that with Ticknor's publishing I shall, for the first time, make something by my poems. I shall clear at least $100 by the first edition, and every subsequent one will be clear gain, as I shall have no expense about the plates. I expect to publish a wholly new volume in May, about which I shall write you in some other letter. I write this in haste, merely to show that I have not forgotten nor ceased to love you.

How soon I shall come to New York is uncertain. I am expecting a visit from Miss Bremer. Mr. Downing wrote me a note, saying how much she, etc., etc., about me, and so Maria wrote and asked her to tarry with us a short time. She wrote a charming letter in reply, and will be with us in the course of next week. . . .

I think you will find my poems improved in the new edition. I have not altered much, but I have left out the poorest and put others in their places. My next volume, I think, will show an advance. It is to be called "The Nooning."* Now guess what it will be. The name suggests pleasant thoughts, does it not? But I shall not tell you anything about it yet, and you must not mention it. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Dec. 22, 1849.

. . . Print *that*† as if you loved it. Let not a comma be blundered. Especially I fear they will put "*gleaming*" for "*gloaming*" in the first line unless you look to it. May you never have the key which shall unlock the whole meaning of the poem to you! . . .

* The design for a volume with this title was not carried out, though cherished for many years. See the prefatory note to "Fitzadam's Story" in "Heartsease and Rue."

† "The First Snow-Fall."

III

1850–1856

DOMESTIC SORROW AND JOY.—VISIT TO EUROPE.—DEATH OF HIS SON AT ROME.—DECLINE OF MRS. LOWELL'S HEALTH.—RETURN TO AMERICA.—DEATH OF MRS. LOWELL.—LECTURES ON THE ENGLISH POETS.—APPOINTMENT TO PROFESSORSHIP IN HARVARD UNIVERSITY.—SECOND VISIT TO EUROPE.

LETTERS TO C. F. BRIGGS, E. M. DAVIS, S. H. GAY, FRANCIS G. SHAW, C. E. NORTON, MISS ANNA LORING, F. H. UNDERWOOD, MISS JANE NORTON, W. J. STILLMAN, JAMES T. FIELDS, JOHN HOLMES, DR. ESTES HOWE, MRS. ESTES HOWE.

THE happiness of Lowell's domestic life was a second time rudely broken in upon by the death of his little daughter Rose, in the spring of 1850—just three years after the death of her sister Blanche. These sorrows told heavily upon him, and still more upon his wife, whose health was always delicate and uncertain. They were made happy, at the end of the year, by the birth of a son, Walter, who became soon a child of uncommon loveliness and promise. Their circumstances were now such that they resolved to go to Europe in the summer of 1851, not without hope that the voyage and travel would be of benefit to Mrs. Lowell. Except to his father, Lowell wrote few letters during their absence. Some record

of their voyage and of their life in Italy is to be found in "Leaves from My Journal in Italy and Elsewhere,"* but there is no reference in the published narrative to the calamity which fell upon them in Rome, in the spring of 1852, in the death of their little boy. It was a grievous blow, and one from which Mrs. Lowell never recovered. They remained abroad till the autumn. The next year was passed very quietly at home. Mrs. Lowell's health sank steadily, and on October 27, 1853, she died.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Jan. 23, 1850.

My dear Friend,—I have never thanked you for your gift of a box of cigars. I am smoking one of them at this very moment. I know not in what light to regard them other than as a kind of parishioner's gift to the Rev. Mr. Wilbur, though there may be a covert satire in thus throwing that gentleman's weakness into his very teeth. My great-grandfather, who was minister of Newbury, and who, being very much of a gentleman and scholar, held out against Whitefield and his extravagances, used to take (I have no doubt) the grocer's share of his salary in tobacco. He was a terrible smoker, and there is still extant in the house he lived in at Newbury a painted panel representing a meeting of the neighboring clergy, each with his pipe and his — pot.† I have a great regard for this excellent man's memory, strengthened by his note-books and by his

* First published in 1854 in "Fireside Travels," and now to be found in the first volume of Lowell's Prose Writings.

† This interesting old panel was afterwards transferred to Elmwood, and set above the mantelpiece in the study.

portrait in gown, bands, and wig, painted (alas!) by one of his parishioners. Therefore I scruple not to thank you for this compliance with my weakness, and feel that I have an ancestral right to pronounce the cigars excellent. . . .

. . . My "new book" is to be called "The Nooning." Maria invented the title for me, and is it not a pleasant one? My plan is this. I am going to bring together a party of half a dozen old friends at Elmwood. They go down to the river and bathe, and then one proposes that they shall go up into a great willow-tree (which stands at the end of the causey near our house, and has seats in it) to take their nooning. There they agree that each shall tell a story or recite a poem of some sort. In the tree they find a countryman already resting himself, who enters into the plan and tells a humorous tale, with touches of Yankee character and habits in it. *I* am to read my poem of the "Voyage of Leif" to Vinland, in which I mean to bring my hero straight into Boston Bay, as befits a Bay-state poet. Two of my poems are already written — one "The Fountain of Youth" (no connection with any other firm), and the other an "Address to the Muse," by the Transcendentalist of the party. I guess I am safe in saying that the first of these two is the best thing I have done yet. But you shall judge when you see it. But "Leif's Voyage" is to be far better. I intend to confute my critics, not with another satire, but by writing better. It is droll that they should say I want variety. Between "Columbus" and Hosea Biglow I think there is some range and some variety of power shown. I cannot help think-

ing that my countrymen will wake up some day and find that they have got a poet. But no matter; do you keep on believing in me, and I shall justify you if I live. I feel that I am very young for a man of thirty, and that I have not by any means got my growth. My poems hitherto have been a true record of my life, and I mean that they shall continue to be. As Alcott said to me the other day, they contain a great deal of *history*. The public have not yet learned to look beyond the titles of them at their meaning. As soon as the wise world is satisfied that I am a poet, I think it will find more in them than it suspected. This is all as it ought to be, and I am writing about it to you as to one who thinks more of me than I do of myself; though, of course, if I did not believe that I was a poet, I should not write a line. The world is right, too, after its own fashion, for I am perfectly conscious that I have not yet got the best of my poetry out of me. What I have written will need to be carried down to posterity on the shoulders of better poems written hereafter, and strong enough to carry the ore in the stone which imbeds it. My dear friend—and you are very dear—I am *not* a fool, at any rate, and I know my own wants and faults a great deal better than any of my critics.

I begin to feel that I must enter on a new year of my apprenticeship. My poems have thus far had a regular and natural sequence. First, Love and the mere happiness of existence beginning to be conscious of itself, then Freedom—both being the sides which Beauty presented to me—and now I am going to try more *wholly* after Beauty herself. Next, if I live, I shall try to pre-

sent Life as I have seen it. In the "Nooning" I shall have not even a glance towards Reform. If the poems I have already written are good for anything they are perennial, and it is tedious as well as foolish to repeat one's self. I have preached sermons enow, and now I am going to come down out of the pulpit and *go about among my parish.* I shall turn my barrel over and read my old discourses; it will be time to write new ones when my hearers have sucked all the meaning out of those old ones. Certainly I shall not grind for any Philistines, whether Reformers or Conservatives. I find that Reform cannot take up the whole of me, and I am quite sure that eyes were given us to look about us with sometimes, and not to be always looking forward. If some of my good red-hot friends were to see this they would call me a backslider, but there are other directions in which one may get away from people beside the rearward one. Thus I have taken an observation whereby to indicate to you my present mental and moral latitude and longitude. As well as I can judge, I am farther eastward or nearer morning than ever hitherto. Am I as tedious as a king?

I am not certain that my next appearance will not be in a pamphlet on the Hungarian question in answer to the *North American Review.* But I shall not write anything if I can help it. I am tired of controversy, and though I have cut out the oars with which to row up my friend Bowen, yet I have enough to do, and, besides, am not so well as usual, being troubled in my head as I was summer before last. I should like to play for a year, and after I have written and printed the "Nooning," I

mean to *take* a nooning and lie under the trees looking at the sky.

Fredrika Bremer stayed three weeks with us, and I do not *like* her, I *love* her. She is one of the most beautiful persons I have ever known—so clear, so simple, so right-minded and -hearted, and so full of judgment. I believe she liked us, too, and had a good time. . . .

With all love,

J. R. L.

TO EDWARD M. DAVIS

" Elmwood, Jan. 24, 1850.

. . . I am much obliged to you for the letter of O. J. which you sent, though, as for the " knockings," I have no manner of faith in them. I do not believe that men are to be thumped into a conception of the spiritual world, or that O. J.'s father, if he had anything to say to his son, would take such a roundabout way as that of going to Mrs. Fish or Miss Fox. Moreover, when the spirits can say what they please to these two women, why do they not use them as spokes-women, instead of using so clumsy a shift as " calling for the alphabet," and then rapping their news? My dear Edward, if the spirits are so wise that they can foretell the future (as in O. J.'s case), why are they so stupid in their contrivances for making themselves intelligible? Depend upon it, there is no *more* humbug in the spiritual world than in this. It would be a parallel case if I, who am able to write you my thoughts plainly and directly, should adopt some system of cryptography and gave you the key of it, so that you would be half a day in making out what need have taken only ten minutes.

And this would be still more ridiculous if I had only some such fact to communicate as that my coat was brown, or that I ate an egg with my breakfast. I have seen persons who could make a "mysterious knocking" by snapping one of their joints in and out. I think we may be sure of this, that God never takes needless trouble. It is only foolish little men that are fond of mysteries and fusses. Then, why should a spirit know anything about the future?

I have only time to write a few suggestions. These "spirits" tell us, it seems, what we already know, nothing else. As for Elias Hicks and George Fox and St. Paul, I could tell O. J. such a story as that without any trouble, and throw him in a few more saints to boot. . . .

Most affectionately,

J. R. L.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, March 17, 1850.

My dear Sydney,—I believe you can understand why I was so unmannerly as to put off so long an answer to your kind letter from Hingham. I was so dull—not well either in body or mind. So it came to the same thing, for if you thought me a hog for my silence, you would have thought me a bore had I broken it.

It was really a great disappointment to me not to see you while you were here. But I knew nothing of your visit until after I had supposed you had gone back, or I should certainly have made an effort to see you. I sympathized most heartily with you in the loss of your brother, but I knew well that there is no such

thing as consolation. To change the old Latin—not ignorant of grief, I know to let the unhappy alone. Time is clearly the only lenitive, and, if not Lethe, it yet softens all wounds except those of conscience. And, no matter how self-sustained the soul may be, there are bodily horrors and shocks connected with Death which leave a deep mark. Can anything be more hateful than the ceremonies which follow in his train, like a sort of hired mourners whom you long to kick? I shall never forget the feeling I had when little Blanche's coffin was brought into the house. It was refreshed again lately. But for Rose I would have no funeral; my father only made a prayer, and then I walked up alone to Mount Auburn and saw her body laid by her sister's.

She was a very lovely child—we think the loveliest of our three. She was more like Blanche than Mabel, and her disease was the same. Her illness lasted a week, but I never had any hope, so that she died to me the first day the doctor came. She was very beautiful—fair, with large dark-gray eyes and fine features. Her smile was especially charming, and she was full of smiles till her sickness began. Dear little child! she had never spoken, only smiled.

To show you that I am not unable to go along with you in the feeling expressed in your letter, I will copy a few verses out of my common-place book.*

> Yes, faith is a goodly anchor
> When the skies are blue and clear;
> At the bows it hangs right stalwart
> With a sturdy iron cheer.

* This poem, revised and enlarged, and called "After the

But when the ship goes to pieces,
And the tempests are all let loose,
It rushes plumb down to the sea-depths,
'Mid slimy seaweed and ooze.

Better then one spar of memory,
One broken plank of the past,
For our human hearts to cling to,
Adrift in the whirling vast.

To the spirit the cross of the spirit,
To the flesh its blind despair,
Clutching fast the thin-worn locket
With its threads of gossamer hair.

O friend! thou reasonest bravely,
Thy preaching is wise and true;
But the earth that stops my darling's ears
Makes mine insensate, too.

That little shoe in the corner,
So worn and wrinkled and brown,
With its emptiness confutes you,
And argues your wisdom down.

But enough, dear Sydney, of death and sorrow. They are not subjects which I think it profitable or wise to talk about, think about, or write about often. Death is a private tutor. We have no fellow-scholars, and must lay our lessons to heart alone.

I was very glad to hear that your little boy had gone through the scarlet-fever—I hope without any reversion of trouble. It is a terrible thing to have only one child. It seems as if the air were full of deadly, invisible bul-

Burial," was printed in 1869, in "Under the Willows, and Other Poems."

lets flying in every direction, so that not a step can be taken in safety.

What would you and the Committee say if I should resign my post in the *Standard?* I feel very strongly inclined to do it at the end of this year (April). It seems to me as if I had said my say—for the present, at least—and had better try silence awhile. I am sick of politics and criticism. Somehow a virtue seems to go out of me at touch of them. I feel as if I could do more good by working in my own vein, however narrow. Tell me what you think about it. Your feelings are the only obstacle in the way of my resigning at once. Your wishing me to hold on would have a great weight with me. You have edited the *Standard* signally well. I said so, you remember, long ago, and I am glad to see that your subscribers are of my opinion. The only fault I find with your salad, as I also said before, is that there may be a little too much mustard now and then. You mix for the Garrisonian palate, which has not, I think, the sensitiveness of entire health.

But I will not do anything for you unless you pay me a visit the next time you come on this way. I wish you and Lizzie to eat our salt as I have eaten yours. I think we could make you very comfortable in the old house. I have a downright quarrel with both you and Briggs on this score. I am in earnest. I don't like one-sided reciprocities, or to be in debt.

Give my love to Briggs, and tell him that I have a letter to him half written, and that it will come soon. I wish to know Page's plans, because I shall come to see him before he goes if I am alive.

Forgive my dull letter, dear Sydney, for I cannot write better just now, and believe me ever

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 17, 1850.

My dear Sydney,—Though I shall certainly be in New York within a few days (I am only waiting now for some new shirts to be done), yet it would be clownish in me not to answer your letter by return of mail. *That* is altogether too slow. How return a pressure of the hand by next day's post, when the other term of the equation has by this time got his fist in his pocket and is thinking of something else? You were plainly in an excellent mood when you wrote your letter—and let me say that your letters are always pleasant, even those shorter ones with an engraving upon the first half-leaf.* You had seated yourself at your desk in the corner there, you had an uncommonly good cigar, Ebenezer (I don't know whether I was ever impudent enough to tell you that you had wronged the boy with that name, avital or not)—E., I say, was asleep (and I do not wonder that so many poets have written verses to sleeping children —it is as if ten thousand Mahratta cavalry had retired from your territory), Lizzie was sitting with a plot in her head how to cure you of smoking, and then you took out your paper. You wish you could have said it by word of mouth, indeed! My dear Sydney, with all that self-possession (our maligners call it by another

* The engraved banker's-draft.

name) which you have acquired by your so-long abolitionism, you could not have flattered me so to my face. Never was a door so diplomatically opened to a gentleman on the point of being turned out neck and heels. I am marched out, as it were, with a band of music before me thumping and blowing "*See the Conquering Hero Comes!*" with that orchestral impartiality ('tis the way of the world) which heralds with the same tune, and the same energy of brass and sheepskin, the advent of a President or a learned pig. I abdicate with the rapid grace of Richard Cromwell when he sat down upon Monk's sword, stuck (as boys stick crooked pins) in the Protectoral chair. I dangle from silk instead of hemp—a ceremonial consolation, since the choking is the meat of the matter. My resignation is "accepted," like that of a vizier, by a couple of mutes with a bowstring.

My dear Sydney, a kick in the breech may be either symbolical or actual, may be either bestowed with a velvet slipper or a cowhide boot; but it is, after all, a kick in the breech. Your kick—no ecclesiologist could have made it more obscurely symbolical; no slipper could be truer three-pile velvet than yours. I send you one last poem, and so, like that famous ghost of Aubrey's, vanish "with a melodious twang." Paint an expulsive toe rampant where my effigies should appear in the succession of *Standard* editors, as an axe was painted instead of a portrait in Faliero's place among the Doges, and write thereunder—*Jacobus ex off. decess. per patibulum A.D. XV Kal. Maii. A.D. MDCCCL.*

Perhaps, instead of saying "I resign," a better form

would be the passive "I am resigned." And so I am. You do me no more than justice in taking it for granted that I am not a fool. I am quite too proud to take offence easily, and I think I have given the Committee a pennyworth. At the same time, I think you overestimate my value to the *Standard*. You remember that I said so frankly when I was first engaged. I have never felt that *entire* freedom without which a man cannot do his best. As there has never been a oneness of sentiment between me and the Society, I retain for them at parting the same feeling which I have ever had. It has never been a matter of dollars between us, for I might have earned much more in other ways—not to mention what I have indirectly lost (and gladly) by my connection with you fanatics. For every poem (except the more exclusively antislavery ones) which has been printed in the *Standard* I could have got four times the money paid me by the Committee. This I wish them distinctly to understand, that they may not imagine that I came to them with my hat held out for an alms. I can truly say that I have been more vexed by the stupid want of appreciation shown by some of our worthies towards you than by any suspicion that they did not rate me highly enough.

And now, dear Sydney, let me only add further, that I trust our friendship will only end at that bourne which is the common close of all. I will not promise to write to you once a month, for you would find letters supplied by contract stupid enough. But I *will* think of you much oftener than that. An author's works are his letters to friends, and if they cannot feel in reading

them that they are freshly remembered, then the works are not good for much. When I came home last night, I found two pleasures (besides Maria and Mabel and the rest) awaiting me. One was your letter, and the other was a letter from an old friend (and you may suppose he must be a friend, for he is a slaveholder) to whom I had not written and from whom I had not heard for seven years. And my love for him was as fresh as when we parted nine years ago, when our lives were all in spring-blossom, not a petal fallen. So pen, ink, and paper are no necessary interlocutors. When there is a need of it I shall send such ambassadors, but, anyhow and anywhere, I shall always remain

Most affectionately your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Sunday, May 19, 1850.

My dear Sydney,—I now fully appreciate the wisdom of that law of Maine which puts off executions till a year has passed after sentence. It gives a chance for something to turn up in a man's favor. What is to be done in the way of reparation to me? I, an innocent man as it now appears, hanged myself in my cell (on a friendly hint from one of the jurors that there was no chance for me) to avoid the opprobrium of public hemp, and now how are the lacerated feelings of a heart-broken wife and a fatherless daughter to be healed? Still more important—how is my neck to be reset? I think I may not immodestly compare myself with Socrates in my manner of ending, however unlike that provoking philosopher

in my previous life. For he, you remember, was "allowed" to drink his own hemlock, and could not legally have that delicate privilege granted him until the sacred vessel Πάραλος had gone to Delos and back again. The sacred vessel in my case was the steamboat which conveyed "a select number of youths and virgins" to the New York Convention and brought them home to their anxious friends.

But, on the other hand, as all the little accidents of life are by the wise man turned to account, and as Madame Tussaud made the discovery that the effigies of a dead criminal would bring in thousands of shillings, while no one would expend a solitary sixpence to look upon the living image of Innocence herself, so I think that, under the present circumstances, I may fairly set a higher price upon my labors. Consider for a moment what an attraction it would be if you could announce in the *prospectus* of next year's *Standard* that the new volume would be enriched with the contributions of a well-known unhappy gentleman who lately laid violent hands upon himself when under sentence of death. You might say that the value of the *Standard* would be very much increased as a *noose*-paper, that it would be found that I was (h)altered for the better, that I had at last got the *hang* of editorship, that my labors had merely been *suspended;* that, in short, the Committee had now consented to give me *cart blanche*, rope enough, my full swing, etc.; that I should write absolute *chokers* in the way of editorials, and strike a pleasant *cord* in the memory of the public.

So far I had written this morning when I was called

away to give Maria and Mab a drive. It is now after dinner, and it is a matter of universal observation that, in proportion as the belly is well filled, the "individual" becomes more respectable and less some other qualities which, perhaps, render him full as agreeable a member of society. Now, to this new proposition of the Committee, what shall I say? I had intended to have "spelled" you (as we Yankees say) now and then with an article *gratis*, and had been churning upon one for a day or two, but how shall I prove it? If the Society offer coin of the realm, it is not in the heart of fallen man to refuse it, especially when such fallen man has just purchased a suit of clothes (badge of the fall) and—does not know so clearly now whence the money is to come that shall pay therefor as he seemed to when he stood triumphant in the tailor's shop and easily bespoke the same. Tailors, by the way, differ from the rest of mankind in this, that whereas all other men in Adam died, so by the consequence of Adam's transgression these get their living. And truly, in so large a matter as the damnation of the whole human race, it would not have become Satan to have stood upon trifles, and to have haggled for these fractions and ninth-parts of men. Do not flatter yourself, my dear Sydney, that you will enjoy the benefit of this exception because you wield a pair of scissors in the way of your trade. No, I am well persuaded that there is not salt enough in the whole editorial fraternity to pickle so much as one of them. Given over for their sins to printers' devils during life, their lot will not change, except in the quality of their diabolic tormentors, after death. . . .

I have written, you see, a diplomatic letter without saying whether I should be a "corresponding editor" or not. But the truth is, I have received no communication from the Committee yet, and so have not made up my mind. There are several fires desirous that some of my irons should be thrust in them—with your fanatical blazes I should only burn my fingers. But, at any rate, with much love to Lizzie and Master Anonymous, I remain

Most affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Election Day, Nov., 1850.

My dear Sydney,—I am just recovering from a kind of ursine existence, a mental winter, during which I have been living upon my own fat. Of course I mean intellectually, for physically I have not much adipocere laid up, and unless the thought of something after death or the like should give me paws, I could not bear it with any hope of surviving by suction. Not that I have been altogether vacant of thought, or the food for it, as may perhaps appear by and by; but pen and ink have seemed insufficient and irrelevant somehow, so that even such a grasshopper as the writing of a letter has seemed a burthen.

I should, nevertheless, have answered Lizzie's letter, if Maria had not done so in my absence. Do you tell her that I did not wish to give her a little keepsake in order to please *her*, but for a much more selfish reason—namely, to please myself. You see, my dear Sydney, that the only money I ever have a chance to part with

in the way of that kind of gift is that which has never got into my pocket. In that nest riches become fledged at once, and fly in all directions like the four-and-twenty blackbirds when the pie was opened. I can go without money for I don't know how long, and not fret myself at the want of it. I have been in that condition ever since my return from Canada—in that condition, or maybe a little worse. I claim no merit for such patience, because I know that those suns and stars, the greater and lesser luminaries of the pocket, have in my case calculable orbits and stated periods of return. Nor am I wholly without experience of comets, unexpected apparitions, nor of meteoric "rocks" (of that species wherewith our countrymen desire to have "a pocket full") falling I know not whence. I only thought that it would be pleasant to me if I knew that some little memorial of me stood upon your table, to remind you of me now and then if I should go to Europe, or take that inevitable journey to the country (not so far off, indeed, but) whence there are no *regular* mails, whatever the Rochester knockers* may be. Now, Lizzie may make *me* a present of this small gratification or not, just as she pleases, but, at any rate, the money can never come into *my* pouch. The black crow that flies in our country's "heaven's sweetest air," the bird of antislavery, may have it; in other words, you may give it to the *caws*, but I will none of it. . . .

I sent you an article last week, but had no time to add even a line of private matter, as our mail closes at the

* It was at Rochester, N. Y., that spirit-rapping began.

very inconvenient hour of one. Inconvenient for me, at least, for I always write on the morning of the latest day, and so have barely three hours after breakfast. I wrote that in such a hurry that I fear there may be some blunders in it. I had some ideas in my head when I went to bed the night before, but I am suspicious that they escaped between that and next morning. I have been hoping to write something in verse about this horrible Slave Bill,* something in Hosea Biglow vein, with a *refrain* to it that would take hold of the popular ear (long enough to be easily taken hold of, you will say). I should like to tack something to Mr. Webster (the most meanly and foolishly treacherous man I ever heard of), like the tail which I furnished to Mr. John P. Robinson. But I wish to be sure that it is good enough before I try it on in public, for a failure in such a case would be disastrous. I walk about crooning over various ridiculous burthens and cadences, and am not without hope that he may catch it yet.

To-day, as you will see by the date of my letter, is our voting-day. What the result will be I have less means of judging than most men. But we abolitionists, you know, have no reason to be over-sanguine. I cannot help thinking that Mr. Mann† will be re-elected, and I hope he will, for I think he has had a sufficiently severe experience of the folly of trying to serve party and duty at the same time. Like the tapster in Henry IVth, he has

* The Bill for the rendition of fugitive slaves.

† Mr. Horace Mann, then a candidate for Congress, but mainly remembered and honored for his services to popular education in Massachusetts.

had only time to cry "Anon, sir," to both parties at once, without satisfying either. Mr. Palfrey will not be chosen. He has less chance than at a special election, because the Hunkers turn out more fully to-day. I shall vote the "Union" ticket (half Free-soil, half Democrat), not from any love of the Democrats, but because I believe it to be the best calculated to achieve some practical result. It is a great object to overturn the Whig domination, and this seems to be the only lever to pry them over with. Yet I have my fears that if we get a Democratic governor he will play some trick or other. *Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes*, if you will pardon stale Latin to Parson Wilbur. . . .

Now that the power of writing has returned to me, you may expect articles pretty regularly. As a general thing, the more I have to do the better I can do it, and I wish this winter to be a productive one. I have promised Story* (this is between ourselves) to go back to Italy with him in June, if I can sell some land wherewith to pay our expenses. How long we shall stay I know not, but the farther I can get from *American* slavery the better I shall feel. Such enormities as the Slave Law weigh me down without rebound, make me unhappy, and too restless to work well in my own special vineyard.

God bless both of you,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 3, 1851.

My dear Sydney,— . . . I should have kept on writ-

* Lowell's friend from boyhood, the eminent sculptor.

ing regularly for the *Standard*, but that I was interrupted by two pressing exigencies. In the first place, I had (with an eye to the monetary crisis which always takes place in my affairs at the feast of the New Year) contracted to supply Graham with a humorous poem before Christmas.* I never undertook humor by contract before. The general result may be stated as ill-humor. However, I had promised. I had a subject, but, for the life of me, I could not begin. Fancy yourself knocked down for a pun at a dinner-party. With your head full of 'em, you would be as incompetent to the percussion-powder explosion under the chairman's hammer as—Greeley, or ———. Well, I could neither begin that nor do anything else. At last, having begun, I was interrupted to write a manifesto on the part of my sister in consequence of ———'s blackguard letters.† Fancy me writing for the *Daily Advertiser*. It was the severest job I ever undertook. The result is only seven columns (and those only a kind of propylæum, for I could hardly enter into the subject); yet I believe I was longer at work in actual hours than in writing all Hosea Biglow and the "Fable for Critics." I shall send you copies when (or if) I have any. As soon as I got through that, I had to go about being funny again—with what success you will see in Graham by and by. It is comfortable writing for Graham, for one never sees or hears of his pieces again unless he choose to collect them. I lay in bed the other

* For his Magazine.

† Letters in which Mrs. Putnam, his sister, had been attacked for her published opinions and statements in regard to the revolution in Hungary.

morning studying the rime upon the windows (which, I remember, used to be a favorite school-exercise with me at Mr. Wells's), and shaped out a little poem, which I shall send you for the *Standard* if it ever gets upon paper. At any rate, I shall send *something* before long. . . .

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 20, 1851.

My dear Sydney,—Edward Davis writes us that he wishes we could persuade you to go to Italy with us—to "go along," as the Philadelphians say—if Lizzie will pardon me. Would there be any use in our trying? There is nothing I should like better. (Maria has written a letter to Lizzie which I did not see—so if I say anything over again you must forgive it.) We are going in a fine ship which will sail from Boston on the 1st July. She was built for a packet, has fine accommodations, and will land us at Genoa—a very fit spot for us New-Worlders to land at and make our first discovery of the Old.

A Castilla y a Leon
(To Yankees also be it known)
Nuevo mundo dió Colon;
And so we Western men owe a
Kind of debt to Genoa.

Also people can live like princes (only more respectably) in Italy on fifteen hundred a year. We are going to travel on our own land. That is, we shall spend at the rate of about ten acres a year, selling our birthrights as

we go along for messes of European pottage. Well, Raphael and the rest of them are worth it. My plan is to sit down in Florence (where, at least, the coral and bells and the gutta-percha dogs will be cheaper) till I have cut my eye(talian) teeth. *Tuscany* must be a good place for that. Then I shall be able to travel about without being too monstrously cheated. Another inducement for you—the Brownings are living there, from whom (you will be pleased to hear) I got a kind message the other day through Charles Norton. Do you think the matter over, and be ready to debate it when I come to New York, as I shall before I go, to bid you all good-by.

We lost five trees by the gale last Wednesday, all firs and fifty feet high. I saw one of them snap like a pipe-stem as I sat at breakfast. It is some consolation to think that they were upset by the heaviest blow ever known in these parts. I also had my personal losses by the storm, though not recorded by the *Cambridge Chronicle*, which contained a sublime description of the flood, and how it stood several feet deep on Magazine Street, and which almost shed tears over the architectural wreck of dozens of those little square edifices which adorn the rear of every Grecian temple in Cambridgeport. I lost a hayrick. It must have presented a magnificent spectacle, and I regret that its struggles and final downfall were not witnessed by the editor of the *Chronicle*, who would have described it epically. Think of me in future as one of the sufferers by the Great Storm. I was thinking of getting up a corporation for the purchase of *mashgraass*, but that is all over now.

I have written some verses which I enclose—but suppose they are too late for this week's *Standard*. If not, let them go in, or somebody else may forestall my market. I agonized to write something about the kidnapping of Sims, but the affair was so atrocious that I could not do it. The flax-cotton is a great thing. You remember "Schmelzle's Journey to Flätz" (Richter), and how he read at last in a chemical work that by a simple process the oxygen might be extracted from the air, and instantly was horror-struck at the thought that some chemist in New Holland might at that very moment be perfecting an experiment by which all the oxygen should be discharged from the atmosphere, and so, *whit!* we all perish? Well this reminds one of it. Claussen with his stem of flax and his three or four phials there in his closet has fairly taken the oxygen out of the air on which slavery (and proslavery) lives. . . .

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO FRANCIS G. SHAW

Rome, 1851.

Dear Frank,—

While this I scribble, I'm sitting for my picture
(And, to tell the honest truth, much rather would be kicked your
Obedient, humble servant) to a gentleman named Kneeland *
(Page will tell you who he is), and at present cannot see land,
Tossed, as in a vile French steamer, on a cross sea of endeavor
To get into an attitude at once sublime and clever,

* Not the true name.

That shall give to whoso sees it no trouble in supposing
'Tis an epic or a tragedy that I am just composing,
To while away the time with; but, in fact, though he don't know it,
I'm at work in my vocation, as a bored satiric poet,
In taking off my taker-off who groweth dull and duller
Twixt studying my attitudes and lecturing me on color,
Out of which series number one (of to-be-published lectures)
I, with such grapnels as I had, have fished these two conjectures:
First—that black's truly white (or somehow so), and second—
That Newton did not know so much as commonly is reckoned.
Thus, while through mist-abysses I'm gradually sinking,
He wishes me to look (d'ye see?) as 'twere profoundly thinking,
That he may paint me, not as if I were a bale of cloth or
A log of wood, but rather as a poet and an author;
So, while he shifts from chair to chair, considering my attitude,
I take my pen (at his request) and thus display my gratitude.
He's a man of some perception (though he *will* call project *progic*),
Tells me that fancy in my make's subordinate to logic,
That my mental current's equable, not torrent-like nor lazy,
And that to paint me as a bard deliberately going crazy
And pouncing on a stanza as a hawk would on his quarry,
Would not express my character, for which I'm truly sorry,
Since he must paint me as I am (you will perceive), and so it
Will not appear to future times that I, as fits a poet,
Had not, 'mongst my other faculties, the chief one of insanity.
Meanwhile, revolving round me still, as if he were a planet, he
Informs me he's approaching now a definite conception,

Wants me to cock my head a bit, and try by self-deception
To make myself believe that e'en this moment in my occiput
I lay the keel and shape the ribs, and on the mental stocks I put
Some mighty ship of thought, some seventy-four-like notion,
That one day shall float proudly on the literary ocean.
In truth, I'm vainly trying to hit on something that will stop his
Morphean style of lecturing, in sentences like poppies,
Which has already put to sleep one leg and, slowly rising,
Will soon o'erpower the rest of me, all senses magnetizing.
He has begun the drawing now, and, in a kind of dark hole
Behind a half-closed shutter, has made a mark with charcoal
For me (whene'er I cease to write) to fix my thought-rapt eyes on
(That's *his* phrase), while he sits at ease and (devil take him!) tries on
One posture after t'other with a burnt stick that goes gritting,
Grit, gritting o'er the canvas, till I fancy I am sitting
Upon my own nerves somehow, with their sharp points all turned upward,
And more edge upon my teeth than the vision of a cupboard
Full of vinegar and oysters would put upon a poor soul's
Who'd been starving in the desert till the dirtiest of Moor's holes
(Where dried barley could be got with a little salt to put on it)
Would seem a branch from Paradise with its ambrosial fruit on it.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 22, 1852.

My dear Friend,— . . . I am very well and rather older—more inclined to stay in the quiet, if it may be,

and lead purely a life of letters. . . . I have written nothing since I left home except a few letters and a journal now and then. I have been absorbing. I have studied Art to some purpose, and like Page's pictures better than ever. Him I saw first in Florence. I went to the Uffizi and passed him without knowing him. All his beautiful hair was cut short, and the top of his head getting bare. After I had passed, I heard him step back from his picture and recognized the tread. He was copying Titian as he was never copied before. I used to see picture and copy side by side—too severe a test—but his copies will bear it. He spent the winter in Florence and I in Rome, whither he goes this autumn. Rome is the only place for him. Few people stop long in Florence, and few orders are given there—in Rome a great many. I saw him next in Venice, where he was making two wonderful sketches of the "Assumption" and the "Presentation in the Temple of the Virgin." We were together all the time nearly—in the gallery of the Academy, in the *gondola*, and at the Piazza in the evenings. He is just the same noble, great man, and as fanatical about a certain person's poems as ever. He has become something of a Swedenborgian, and finds great comfort in the inspired Bacon's writings. . . .

I am as ever most affectionately your friend,

J. R. L.

TO MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW

Elmwood, Jan. 11, 1853.

My dear Sarah,—You know that I promised solemnly to write you a letter from Switzerland, and therefore, of

course, I didn't do it. These epistolary promises to pay always do (or at least always ought to) come back protested. A letter ought always to be the genuine and natural flower of one's disposition—proper both to the writer and the season—and none of your turnip japonicas cut laboriously out of a cheap and flabby material. Then, when you have sealed it up, it comes out fresh and fragrant. I do not like shuttle-cock correspondences. What is the use of our loving people if they can't let us owe them a letter? if they can't be sure we keep on loving them if we don't keep sending an acknowledgment under our hands and seals once a month? As if there were a statute of limitations for affection! The moment Love begins to think of Duty, he may as well go hang himself with his own bow-string. All this means that if I should never write you another letter (which is extremely likely), and we should never meet again till I drop in upon you some day in another planet, I shall give an anxious look at myself in the mirror (while I am waiting for you to come down), and shall hear the flutter of your descending wings with the same admiring expectation as I should now listen for your foot upon the stairs. . . .

Now, the reason I am writing to you is this: I spent Sunday with Edmund Quincy at Dedham, and, as I came back over the rail yesterday, I was roused from a reverie by seeing "West Roxbury Station" written up over the door of a kind of Italian villa at which we stopped. I almost twisted my head off looking for the house on the hill. There it stood in mourning still, just as Frank painted it. The color suited my mood exact-

ly. The eyes of the house were shut, the welcoming look it had was gone; it was dead. I am a Platonist about houses. They get to my eye a shape from the souls that inhabit them. My friends' dwellings seem as peculiar to them as their bodies, looks, and motions. People have no right to sell their dead houses; they should burn them as they used to burn corpses. Suppose these bodies of ours could be reinhabited, and that our heirs could turn an honest penny (as American heirs certainly would) by disposing of them by auction. How could we endure to see Miss Amelia Augusta Smith's little soul giggling out of those sacred caves where we had been wont to catch glimpses of the shrinking Egeria of refined and noble womanhood? With what horror should we hear the voice that had thrilled us with song, startled us with ambushes of wit, or softened us with a sympathy that made us feel somehow as if our mother's tears were mixed with its tones—I say, with what horror should we hear it using all its pathos and all its melodious changes for the cheapening of a tarlatan muslin or the describing the dress that Eliza Ann wore at her wedding! I was too far off, thank God, to see Mrs. Smith looking out of your dead house's windows, but I mused of these things as the train rolled on, and caught fragments of the vapid talk of a couple on the seat before me. I have buried that house now and flung my pious handful of earth over it and set up a head-stone—and I shall never look up to the hill-top again, let me pass it never so often. But I resolved to write a letter to its departed spirit. . . . .

. . . It is hard writing at such a distance. If one be

in good spirits, and write a nice, pleasant, silly letter, it may find those to whom it goes on the other side of the world in the midst of a new sorrow, and will be as welcome as a half-tipsy wedding-guest at a funeral. The thing which everybody here is talking about is the Tippers. The Rappers are considered quite *slow* nowadays. Tables speak as inspired, consolatory nothings are literally delivered *ex cathedrâ*. Bores whom we thought buried out of the way long ago revive in washstands and bedsteads. Departed spirits still rule us—but no longer metaphorically from their urns — they speak to us through the excited centre-table. I have heard of a particular teapoy that was vehement, slowly argumentative, blandly sympathetic, wildly romantic, and all with its legs alone. Little did John Chinaman dream what he was making, as little as John Shakespeare knew that he had begotten the world's wonder William. A neighbor of ours has an exhorting boot-jack, and I expect every day to hear of the spirit of Diogenes in a wash-tub. Judge Wells (*Aunt* Wells, as he is affectionately called by the Bar) is such a powerful *medium* that he has to drive back the furniture from following him when he goes out, as one might a pack of too affectionate dogs. I have no doubt I shall meet him some day with a footstool gambolling at his side or leaping up on his reluctant legs. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Feb. 17, 1853.

. . . By the way, you ought, it seems to me, to assume a nominative personality—I mean, take an edito-

rial name, like Kit North, Oliver Yorke, and Sylvanus Urban, Gent. It will be very useful on occasion. Just think it over. The public (hallowed name!) like these impersonal persons. They invest them with a halo of pleasant imaginary characteristics, and *cotton* to them more kindly than to downright, vulgar flesh-and-blood. A "comic man" wants the use of some such *nominis umbra* for notes and occasional interjections—so that he may not always soliloquize, but may cut himself up when he wants a dialogue. Besides, one feels free to attribute his own good qualities to a personage of the fancy, and can, by means of him, expose all his pleasant weak points and silly little tastes and whimwhams without egotism. Hence Bickerstaff, De Coverley, Mr. Shandy, Geoffrey Crayon, Teufelsdröckh, and the rest. It is worth considering. Talk it over with the Pilgrim,* who is good at names. Give my best regards to him. I liked him as I do not often like new acquaintances. . . .

God bless you,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

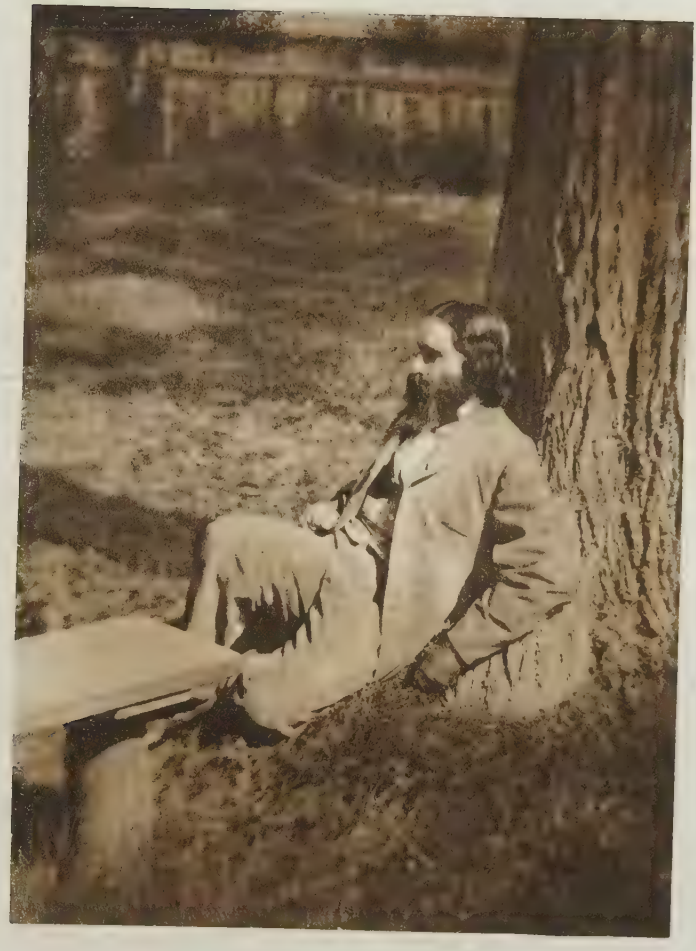
Elmwood, June 10, 1853.

My dear Friend,—Of course I am sorry that "Our Own" has not succeeded, the more so as I was beginning to hope, from some things I heard, that folks were getting to like it better. For all that, I cannot give up fancying that there is good in it—and I can bear this kind of cross as well as most people. My counsel is

* George William Curtis, then associated with Mr. Briggs in the editorship of *Putnam's Magazine*.

not to print any more of it. That it should be damned is nothing. I could print it, as Fielding did one of his stupid farces, with "as it was d—d in *Putnam's Magazine*" on the title-page. But I could not bear to have you go on publishing it to the detriment of the *Magazine*, merely out of friendship to me. You have no right to, for you are a trustee, and your first duty is to Putnam. I thank God for giving me at least this talent —that I love my friends better than I do my own pride, and can almost persuade myself that I love them nearly as well as my interest. There is no *spatula* with which you can hold the Public's tongue while you force things down their throat, and if there were there would be no use in it. These rubs, I fancy, brighten a man's wits, and may help to let him know if his mind be an Aladdin's lamp with which he can build palaces, or mere Brummagem which shows the copper the more you scour. At any rate, it is a charming provision of nature that all such adventures end, like Falstaff's scene with Prince Hal, in our thinking better of ourselves for valiant lions ever after. The chief result of the affair will be that I shall add to a letter which I wrote yesterday to Story, in which I spoke of "Our Own," this P. S.: "I just hear from Briggs that it is irretrievably damned." *Conclusum est de illo—periit.*

Meanwhile the thing has done me good already. It has given me something which I have a right to be annoyed at and so relieved me of some imaginary stuff that darkened my mind. I do honestly feel more troubled on your account than my own, for I am sensible that I have disappointed a hope you had that I



might be of service to you in a way that would be profitable to myself. I am in the position of a man who has allowed a note to be protested which has been endorsed by a friend. I owe you a large debt of affection and friendship, and, as I cannot pay you in any other way, I must even do it in kind—not a bad way neither, for it is a currency rarer, as this world goes, than pine-tree shillings of the first issue. Authors ought certainly to be as sensible as shopkeepers, and to know that if the public does not want their wares, it will not buy them any the sooner for being called fool and blockhead. There may be a satisfaction in it, but it will not help pay a quarter's rent. The best way is to take down sign, shut up shop, and go westward where there are fresh fields and pastures new, and both fortune and health to be dug from the soil. *My* West is to be found in a course of lectures, which I have already been paid for, and which I am to deliver before the Lowell Institute next winter. I dare say they will be all the better for my having some of my conceit knocked out of me, and I can revenge myself on the dead poets for the injuries received by one whom the public won't allow among the living. I have also got so far as to have written the first chapter of a prose book—a sort of New England autobiography, which may turn out well, and I have the "Nooning" to finish—which *shall* turn out well.

I hope you will print Clough's* article—both on his account, for he is a man of genius, and on your own,

* Clough was at this time resident in Cambridge. He contributed several admirable articles to *Putnam's Magazine*.

for he will make a valuable contributor. His "Bothie" is a rare and original poem, quite Homeric in treatment and modern to the full in spirit. I do not know a poem more impregnated with the nineteenth century or fuller of tender force and shy, delicate humor. Is it within the possibilities of human nature that I like it all the better, and feel more inclined to stand by it, because it was unsuccessful? At any rate, I formed my opinion of it when I did not know whether it were popular or not. An oriole and a linnet have been singing against each other under my window, as the old minnesingers did in their song-tournaments. The linnet has kept the field, and, mounted on a higher elm-spray, sings louder than ever. Well, singing is pleasant, after all, and there may be some one whom you know naught of who is delighted as I am with the linnet. A bobolink and a catbird have entered the lists now, and the poor linnet is silenced. I think the bobolink the best singer in the world, even undervaluing the lark and the nightingale in the comparison. We do not ask any variety in the songs of birds. It is their very individuality that pleases us and our knowing the old friend by his first note. I fancy it is the same with poets, and that the man who can contrive to get *himself* into his verses, no matter how small he is, will live with the best of them. . . .

Ever most affectionately yours (though d—d),

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Sept., 1853.

. . . I have corrected "Moosehead," stricken out a sentence or two, added an exculpatory colophon, and

you have it with this. I notice a suspicious "2d" on the leaves of the last half. Don't cut it in halves. It will make but eleven pages, and is much better all together. If it is dull, the public won't thank you for making two doses of it; if entertaining, they will be glad to have it all at once. . . .

The October number hasn't come yet, and we miss it —as it is the only periodical we have. Of September I got *two* copies, and you may think if I get twelve in the year it is all right. I wish to see Maria's poem. She is quite cutting me out as a poet—though she laughs when I tell her so, God bless her! But I am going to astonish you (and everybody else, except Page) one of these days, my boy. I am beginning, I hope, to find out that I can *work*. Laziness has ruined me hitherto.

Ever lovingly yours,

COBUS.

TO THE SAME

Oct. 6, 1853.

. . . I have copied a poem of Maria's which it would be a great pleasure to me to see in the next number. The delight which it gives me to see them printed and liked is a great pleasure to her. And it gives her something to think about—a sort of tie to this world, as it were. I cannot bear to write it, but she is very dangerously ill—growing weaker and weaker. You must give my best regards to Curtis, and say that I must give up the hope of a visit from him this autumn.

Will you also send me whatever is due to her for the other poem?—for she would like to spend it for something.

It is only within the last week that I have realized the danger. She has been so often ill and rallied from it that I supposed she would soon begin to get better. But there seems no force left now.

I understand now what is meant by "the waters have gone over me." Such a sorrow opens a door clear down into one's deepest nature that he had never suspected before.

God bless you.

Ever yours,

J. R. Lowell.

No greater natural sorrow can befall a man than that which came to Lowell in the death of his wife. But he was not broken down by it. His temperament was too healthy, his character too strong to allow him to give way to despair. Of his four children, one little girl was left to him, for whose sake he must live. He sought distraction in work, and employed himself in writing. For the sake of change of scene and air, he spent the next summer on the sea-shore at Beverly. In the autumn he set to work upon a series of twelve lectures on the English Poets, to be read at the Lowell Institute in Boston, in the winter. His powers of critical appreciation and reflection were displayed to advantage in these lectures. No such discourses had been heard in America. They added greatly to his reputation as critic, scholar, and poet. In January, 1855, he was appointed to the professorship of "French and Spanish Languages and Literatures, and Belles-Lettres," in Harvard College—a chair to which its previous occupants, Ticknor and

Longfellow, had given the highest distinction. He accepted the place with the condition that, before entering on its duties, he should spend a year or more in Europe, for the purpose of making special preparatory studies.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Nov. 25, 1853.

My dear old Friend, — Your letter came while I was sadly sealing up and filing away my old letters, for I feel now for the first time old, and as if I had a past— something, I mean, quite alien to my present life, and from which I am now exiled. How beautiful that past was and how I cannot see it clearly yet for my tears I need not tell you. I can only hope and pray that the sweet influences of thirteen years spent with one like her may be seen and felt in my daily life henceforth. At present I only feel that there *is* a chamber whose name is Peace, and which opens towards the sunrising, and that I am not in it. I keep repeating to myself "by and by," "by and by," till that trivial phrase has acquired an intense meaning. I know very well that this sunset-glow, even of a life like hers, will fade by degrees; that the brisk, busy day will return with its bills and notes and beef and beer, intrusive, distracting —but in the meantime I pray. I do abhor sentimentality from the bottom of my soul, and cannot wear my grief upon my sleeves, but yet I look forward with agony to the time when she may become a memory instead of a constant presence. She promised to be with me if that were possible, but it demands all the

energy of the soul to believe without sight, and all the unmetaphysical simplicity of faith to distinguish between fact and fancy. I know that the little transparent film which covers the pupil of my eye is the only wall between her world and mine, but that hair-breadth is as effectual as the space between us and the sun. I cannot see her, I cannot feel when I come home that she comes to the door to welcome me as she always did. I can only hope that when I go through the last door that opens for all of us I may hear her coming step upon the other side. That her death was so beautiful and calm and full of faith as it was gives me no consolation, for it was only that rare texture of her life continuing to the very end, and makes me feel all the more what I had and what I have not.

I began this upon a great sheet because it reminded me of the dear old times that are dead and buried now. But I cannot write much more. I keep myself employed most of the time—in something mechanical as much as possible—and in walking. . . .

You say something of coming to Boston. I wish I could see you. It would be a great comfort. . . .

I am glad for your friendly sake that my article was a popular one, but the news of it only pained me. It came too late to please the only human being to please whom I greatly cared and whose satisfaction was to me prosperity and fame. But her poem—how beautiful it was, and how fitting for the last! . . .

So God bless you, and think of me always as your more loving friend,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Feb. 1, 1854.

An ode of thanks for certain cigars, of which I am now smoking the third and find them excellent.

Luck, my dear Norton, still makes shifts
To mix a moral with her gifts,
Which he may find who duly sifts.

Sweets to the sweet—behold the clue!
Why not, then, new things to the gnu,
And trews to Highland clansmen true?

'Twas thus your kindly thought decreed
These weeds to one who is indeed,
And feels himself, a very weed,—

A weed from which, when bruised and shent,
Though some faint perfume may be rent,
Yet oftener much without a cent.

But imp, O Muse, a stronger wing
Mount, leaving self below, and sing
What thoughts these Cuban exiles bring!

He that knows aught of mythic lore
Knows how god Bacchus wandered o'er
The earth, and what strange names he bore.

The Bishop of Avranches supposes
That all these large and varying doses
Of fable mean naught else than Moses;

But, waiving doubts, we surely know
He taught mankind to plough and sow,
And, from the Tigris to the Po

Planted the vine; but, of his visit
To this our Hemisphere, why is it
We have no statement more explicit?

He gave to us a leaf divine
More grateful to the serious Nine
Than fierce inspirings of the vine.

And, that *he* loved it more, this proved,—
He gave his name to what he loved,
Distorted now, but not removed.

Tobacco, sacred herb, though lowly,
Baffles old Time the tyrant wholly
And makes him turn his hour-glass slowly;

Nay, makes, as 'twere, of every glass six,
Whereby we beat the heathen classics
With their weak Chians and their Massics.

These gave his glass a quicker twist,
And flew the hours like driving mist,
While Horace drank and Lesbia kissed.

How are we gainers, when all's done,
If Life's swift clepsydra have run
With wine for water? 'Tis all one.

But this rare plant delays the stream
(At least if things are what they seem)
Through long eternities of dream.

What notes the antique Muse had known
Had she, instead of oat-straws, blown
Our wiser pipes of clay or stone!

Rash song, forbear! Thou canst not hope,
Untutored as thou art, to cope
With themes of such an epic scope.

Enough if thou give thanks to him
Who sent these leaves (forgive the whim)
Plucked from the dream-tree's sunniest limb.

My gratitude feels no eclipse;
For I, whate'er my other slips,
Shall have his kindness on my lips.

The prayers of Christian, Turk, and Jew
Have one sound up there in the blue,
And one smell all their incense, too.

Perhaps that smoke with incense ranks
Which curls from 'mid life's jars and clanks.
Graceful with happiness and thanks.

I pledge him, therefore, in a puff—
A rather frailish kind of stuff,
But still professional enough.

Hock-cups breed hiccups; let us feel
The god along our senses steal
More nobly and without his reel.

Each temperately 'baccy *plenus*,
May no grim fate of doubtful genus
E'er blow the smallest cloud between us.

And, as his gift I shall devote
To fire and o'er their ashes gloat,—
Let him do likewise with this note.

J. R. L.

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, Feb. 8, 1854.

. . . I have an essay on "Cambridge Twenty Years Ago," which I would finish for you if you wished it. It is better than that Moosehead thing, and Maria liked it.

Of course, I had rather you should print it than any one else. . . .

Curtis has been here and was as delightful as could be. He is a most charming companion, and his mind works so easily. I think his "Castle-building" one of the best essays I ever read — I don't care by what author. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Feb. 15, 1854.

My dear old Friend,— . . . As for the poem I sent, as it is too late for March I care no more about it. But you are all wrong in the matter. It *is* good and you will think so one of these days. You see how obstinate I am. I really do not care for anybody's opinion but my own—good opinion I mean—and, thank God! I have never got that yet. Of course, I should like popularity if I could get it—the grapes are not sour; on the contrary, no one can enjoy more heartily than I do the sweetness of Curtis's, who is eating them now with the bloom on, pulpy and full of sun. It is a pleasure to me to see him—for he will never be so happy again. The grape disease gets hold of all but this first crop. Popularity is as good for an author as the good-will of an audience to a speaker. It is his magnetism, and he lives and writes with the force of all his admirers—or, at any rate, I should. . . .

If I can, I will write something about Clough, for I love him and would like to do him a service in an honest way. You can do penance by praising him for your (I don't mean your, but your magazine's) article about Alexander Smith, whose book is no more a poem than a

brush-heap is a tree. However, poor fellow, he is done for. He has announced another volume, and, as he can't come up to what was said of his first, it will be counted a failure if ever so good. He has been launched as I have seen boys launch their little vessels—with so strong a push as to run wholly under water.

I liked your article about the theatre very much, and I wish you would do your Swift. *That* would be excellent, I know. Why not make it a short Life, which is still a great desideratum? I liked Curtis's "Châteaux" too. It is the best essay you have printed in *Putnam*. I think it more natural than his "Potiphar Papers," or, rather, the characters all existing and moving in that half-ideal air which is proper to the essay, we do not demand in them so much sharpness of outline and truth to every day which is essential in stories of life and the world. In the essay the characters *ought* to be Ideas talking—but the fault of the "Potiphar Papers" seems to me to be that in them also there are dialogizing and monologizing thoughts, but not flesh and blood enough. In Dickens, the lower part of "the World" is brought into the Police Court, as it were, and there, after cross-examination, discharged or committed, as the case may be. The characters are real and low, but they are facts. That is one way. Thackeray's is another and better. One of his books is like a Dionysius ear, through which you hear the World talking, entirely unconscious of being overheard. . . .

TO MISS LORING

Elmwood, Feb. 23, 1854.

. . . I have been working like a dog (as the proverb is,

though I never saw any very industrious members of that family), driven to it by the two strongest motives, need of occupation and of money.

The first half of my travels to Subiaco * will be printed in *Graham* next month. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 29, 1854.

. . . Is not all this about that poor fugitive Burns *nasty?* I can find no other word. I do not like to think that the natural instincts of Massachusetts are all snobbish, but it would take a good deal to convince me that they are not. They seem to take a positive pleasure in doing anything for a man whom they think an aristocrat; and while the Virginia newspapers are descanting on the meritoriousness of shooting Yankee schoolmasters, they are inviting a Virginia slave-hunter to dinner. By St. Paul! if things go on and the old Puritan spirit once get up again (if it be not dead), we may send them schoolmasters such as Oliver sent to Ireland. . . .

TO F. H. UNDERWOOD

Beverly, Tuesday,
July the somethingth (1854).

My dear Underwood,—I have just come out of a fog and become part of the creation again. For two days you could not see your hand before your face, unless you held it there; and although a dense vapor went

* A part of "Leaves from My Journal."

drifting by all the time, yet, in the words of King James Fifth's ballad,

"Nothing was gone that could be *mist*."

To-day is as fine as can be, with a great lazy, hazy sea, and just enough fishing-boats to be picturesque without suggesting too vividly the idea of labor. The shadows of the white sails of immovable schooners fade immeasurably towards me over the varnished sea. It has not gone eight bells yet!! (Is not that a fine touch of maritime description, that last? God knows we have nothing in the house but one Connecticut clock that strikes on a spring in the briskly funereal manner that characterizes the time-pieces from that locality—as if another hour were dead, and we must say a moral word or two, and then bury him out of the way as soon as possible.) The consequence of its not having gone eight bells is that I am hitherto breakfastless, and with all the appetite incident to this marginal life. The tide is running out (that is one of our events) and the wind Sothe West by Sothe.

I don't know if you will ever get this. We were blockaded entirely by the fog. The last newspaper I saw was the *Liberator*, and that inclines me to think that Boston has by this time met the fate of Sodom. When I come up to Commencement I expect to be ferried over a lake Asphaltites, where that once happy capital stood, and I will get the ferryman to rake a little with a boat-hook in the neighborhood of Phillips & Sampson's.* . . .

* A publishing house, in whose business Mr. Underwood was engaged.

I am in Cambridge to-morrow and next day, and shall see you, I hope. I will then arrange for your coming down hither. I have to write in haste, to send by a coach that passes.

Remember me to Mrs. Underwood, and believe me always yours,

J. R. L.

TO MISS NORTON

[Beverly] Ship *Underhill*, Eldredge, Mistress,
Lat. 40° 20′, Long. (bad observation),
Islands of Sirens bearing E.S.E. 2½ miles.
Aug. 14, 1854.

. . . If I may trust a rather poor memory—without a book to make a crutch of—I ought to thank you for having given me so happy an example of the force of habit. Some four thousand years ago the fountain of Arethusa went down near Eleusis (?) and came up at Syracuse in Sicily, and now, translated to America and tolerably well bound, it has contrived to do the same thing between Shady Hill and Newport. I am quite content. I could not have a better minister resident, nor one less intrusive, only reminding you of me when you choose to give an audience, and then always saying better things than I could. So pray do not give her her passports yet. I shall bring the "Conversations" when I am happy enough to come myself.

Now—in order that you may not fancy (as most persons who go to Rhode Island do) that Newport is the only place in the world where there is any virtue in salt water—I will say a word or two of Beverly. Country and sea-shore are combined here in the most charming

way. Find the Yankee word for Sorrento, and you have Beverly—it is only the Bay of Naples translated into the New England dialect. The ocean and the forest are not estranged here, and the trees trust themselves down to the water's edge most confidingly. In some places the ivy plays in the air and the kelp in the water, like children of different ranks making shy advances to each other. Close behind us rises a rocky hill, and the pine woods begin—wonderful woods, called Witch Woods by the natives because it is so easy to lose your way in them. All through them strange rocks bulge out—amphibious-looking hybrids between sea-shore and inland—their upper edges fringed lightly with ferns that seem to entangle the sunshine and hold it fast, and their bases rough with queer lichens that look like water-weeds. I think there is more ocean than land in the blood of these rocks, and they always seem to me listening and waiting for the waves. If you leap down from one of them you sink ankle-deep in springy pine-tassel or moss. Somewhere in these woods is a visionary clearing and farm-house, which every one gets a glimpse of—but no man hath seen twice. You hear the crowing of cocks, the contented low of cattle rubbing their soft throats over the polished bars, and sometimes a muffled throb of flails; presently, through some wood-gap, you see the chimney and the blue breath of the hearth in the cool air, but when you have made your way through the next thicket, all is gone. I think it is the farm of one of the old Salem warlocks, and buy my vegetables warily, fearful of some ill thing. Here and there, climbing some higher rock, you get a gleam of sea through some

scoop in the woods—a green cup filled half with potable gold.

We are in a little house close upon the road, with the sea just below, as seen through a fringe of cedar, wild cherry, and barberry. Beyond this fringe is a sand-beach where we bathe. . . . As I look out of my window I see the flicker of the sea's golden scales (which the moon will by and by touch with her long wand and turn to silver) stretching eastward forever. We are at the foot of a bay, across the mouth of which lies a line of islands—some bare rock, some shrubby, and some wooded. These are the true islands of the Sirens. One has been disenchanted by a great hotel, to which a steamboat runs innumerably every day with a band—the energetic *boong! boong!—boong! boong! boong!*—of the bass drum being all we hear. Our sunset is all in the south-east, and every evening the clouds and islands bloom and the slow sails are yellowed and the dories become golden birds swinging on the rosy water.

Well, well, after all, I am only saying that Nature is here as well as at Newport, and that she has not lost her knack at miracles. But at Newport you have no woods, and ours are so grand and deep and unconverted! They have those long pauses of conscious silence that are so fine, as if the spirit that inhabits them were hiding from you and holding its breath—and then all the leaves stir again, and the pines cheat the rocks with their mock surf, and that invisible bird that haunts such solitudes calls once and is answered, and then silence again. I would not have told you how much better this is than your Rhode Island glories—only that you Newport folks

always seem a little (I must go to my Yankee) *stuck up*, as if Newport were all the world, and you the saints that had inherited it. But I hope to see you and Newport soon, and I will be lenient. You shall find in me the Beverly grandeur of soul which can acknowledge alien merit.

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Grub Street, Dec. 7, 1854.

My dear Sir,—I am sorry to have kept your proofs so long, but I was absent from home the day they came.

I don't know now whether I sent the right part of the poem.* But I wished to give you the most *palletty* part first, and am now so overwhelmed with Lectures and Grub Street that I have literally not time to copy the introductory verses describing the island. But, my dear sir, if Bryant has given you a poem you should put *that* in your first number by all means. It will do you more good than many of mine, and your first duty is to your *Crayon*-child, wherever you are not obliged to sacrifice any principle to it. Don't mind me in the least. *I* wish your journal to succeed. Remember that success is the only atmosphere through which your ideas will look lovely to the public you wish to influence. Bryant's name will help you more than mine, therefore take him first. Not that I like to give up my place on

* Mr. Stillman was about to begin the publication of the *Crayon*, a weekly journal of art and literature, and the poem here referred to was entitled "My Appledore Gallery." This poem now appears, in part, in Lowell's Works as "Pictures from Appledore." The *Crayon* was the most able and interesting journal of the kind ever published in America. Its volumes have a permanent value, but are now hard to obtain.

board at the launch neither, for I am sure it will be a graceful one.

You mustn't talk about Christmas gifts and things. I shall think you mean to keep me in Grub Street in spite of myself. I positively will not be paid in any way, if I may say so after being more than paid by your beautiful drawings, which Mabel likes as much as I do, and declares a preference for the larger one—"On the . . . "—I can't make out the name—but I shall call it the Lethe, that drowsy water with tree-dreams in it—so smooth and sleek and soaked with sun, it seems a drink of it would quench the thirst of all sad memories. Only no Lethe *can*, for we are our own saddest memories —a hundred a day. I thank you for them most heartily and for your letter as well. I am glad you had a pleasant day here. *I* had, and you made me fifteen years younger while you stayed. When a man gets to my age enthusiasms don't often knock at the door of his garret. I am all the more charmed with them when they come. A youth full of such pure intensity of hope and faith and purpose—what is he but the breath of a resurrection-trumpet to us stiffened old fellows, bidding us up out of our clay and earth if we would not be too late!

Your inspiration is still to you a living mistress—make her immortal in her promptings and her consolations by imaging her truly in art. Mine looks at me with eyes of paler flame and beckons across a gulf. You came into my loneliness like an incarnate aspiration. And it is dreary enough sometimes, for a mountain-peak on whose snow your foot makes the first mor-

tal print is not so lonely as a room full of happy faces from which *one* is missing forever. This was originally the fifth stanza of "The Windharp":

O tress! that so oft on my heart hast lain,
Rocked to rest within rest by its thankful beating,
Say, which is harder—to bear the pain
Of laughter and light, or to wait in vain
'Neath the unleaved tree the impossible meeting?
If Death's lips be icy, Life gives, I wis,
Some kisses more clay-cold and darkening than his!

Forgive me, but you spoke of it first.

I have done better than send you a poem—I have got you—a subscriber! On this momentous topic I shall enlarge no further than to say that I wish to be put on your list also in my capacity as gentleman and not author. I will not be deadheaded. I respect my profession too much.

You may add a note, if you like, saying that Appledore is one of the Isles of Shoals, off Portsmouth, N. H., discovered by the *great* Captain Smith, and once named after him. A cairn on the apex of Appledore is said to be of his building.

Heartily and hopefully yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO MISS LORING

Elmwood, Jan. 4, 1855.

. . . I have been worked to death, and in wretched spirits about my lectures, which *would not* march as I wished them to, for all I could do. I am beginning now to be able to be carried away a little—so I may get something into them. . . .

Man (or at any rate the subgenus Lowell) was not meant to earn his living—but won't I *live* when I get done with it? By April first I shall be free—I shall have done making a fool of myself, and shall make April fools of other people with immense relish. . . .

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Elmwood, Jan. 11, 1855.

My dear Friend,—I fear you have thought me very cold and ungrateful not to have answered sooner (if it were only with God bless you!) your very kind and tender letter. I cannot say more of it than that it came to my heart like the words of a woman. I need not write how entirely grateful I am for it.

I have delayed writing till I found a chance to copy some more "Appledore" for you. I have sent a tolerably long bit this time, for I suppose you will like something to fill up as much as may be. So look upon it as a large canvas that will, at least, cover bare wall. I have had your two drawings framed, and they hang up now on the inside of my door and please everybody that sees them, me above all.

I have been so fearfully busy with my lectures! And so nervous about them, too! I had never spoken in public, there was a great rush for tickets (the lectures are *gratis*), only one in five of the applicants being supplied—and altogether I was taken quite aback. I had no idea there would be such a desire to hear me.

I delivered my first lecture to a crowded hall on Tuesday night, and I believe I have succeeded. The

lecture was somewhat abstract, but I kept the audience perfectly still for an hour and a quarter. (They are in the habit of going out at the end of the hour.) I delivered it again yesterday afternoon to another crowd, and was equally successful—so I think I am safe now. But I have six yet to write, and am consequently very busy and pressed for time.

I felt anxious, of course, for I had a double responsibility. The lectures were founded by a cousin of mine, and the trustee is another cousin—so I wished not only to do credit to myself and my name, but to justify my relative in appointing me to lecture.

It is all over now—and, as far as the public are concerned, I have succeeded; but the lectures keep me awake and make me lean.

I am quite sensible now that I did not do Mr. Bryant justice in the "Fable." But there was no personal feeling in what I said—though I have regretted what I *did* say because it might seem personal. I am now asked to write a review of his poems for the *North American*. If I do, I shall try to do him justice.

I think he has been more fortunate in Flemish pictures than I if he does not find in "Appledore" a *sentiment* that is wanting in them. One of the best fragments is yet to come.

Consider my immense occupation just now, and if I do not always write it, still believe that I am

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 25, 1855.

My dear Friend,— I came very near forgetting my proof-sheets altogether, but I have delivered five of my lectures now, and on Friday shall have half finished my course. Meanwhile I have only a week's start, so that I have to work hard—what with inevitable interruptions.

I like Mr. "W. Sylvester's" poem very much indeed. I can only give my general feeling now. I will enter upon some particulars by and by. But I like it particularly, though—no, I was going to say that I was not sure that I accepted the philosophy of it; but, on looking again, I find it stated with more limitation than I had supposed.

Do not think that I feel the less interest in you and yours because I write such scrawls. I am not used to being tied to hours or driven. I have always waited upon the good genius—and he will not come for being sent after by express, so I am in a *feeze* half the time.

I find the *Crayon* liked (as it deserves) by those I chance to see. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Monday [Feb., 1855].

. . . I shall have done grinding for the Philistines next Saturday, and it will give me, I need not say, the greatest pleasure to see you.

I dare say I was thinking of you the day you speak of—for I often do, busy as I am, and I have been mean-

ing for some time to write you a word merely to say that Longfellow told me the other day that he would send you the first poem he had that was suitable for your purpose. Perhaps he has written; if not, I shall be glad to be the herald.

You will like to hear (but at present it is a semi-secret) that I am to be nominated next Thursday to fill Longfellow's place in the College. It was all very pleasant, for the place sought me, and not I it.

I have only to deliver two courses of lectures in the year, have all the rest of my time to myself, and the salary will make me independent. If the Overseers of the College confirm the appointment of the Corporation (of which there is little doubt) I shall go abroad for a year to Germany and Spain to acquire the languages.

So by the time you come I shall probably be Professor Lowell at your service, and shall expect immense respect in consequence. Take care after that how you squire or mister me!

I have not discovered the dulness of the *Crayon*, and only hope its point will be sharp enow to *draw* the public.

If I go to Berlin, I will send you some sketches of the gallery there. Spain, too, is rich. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Madison, Wisconsin, April 9, 1855.

. . . Though I have been in such dreadfully low spirits since I left home that I have not seen much to write about, yet I like to keep my promises, and as I have had one *very* pleasant adventure, I will try to make a letter

of it. I will premise generally that I hate this business of lecturing. To be received at a bad inn by a solemn committee, in a room with a stove that smokes but not exhilarates, to have three cold fish-tails laid in your hand to shake, to be carried to a cold lecture-room, to read a cold lecture to a cold audience, to be carried back to your smoke-side, paid, and the three fish-tails again—well, it is not delightful exactly. On the whole, I was so desperate that, after a week of it, I wrote out hither to be let off—but they would not, and so here I am. I shall go home with six hundred dollars in my pocket, and one of those insects so common in Italy and Egypt in my ear. Sometimes, though, one has very pleasant times, and one gets *tremendous* puffs in the local papers.

But . . . I have a nice little oasis to talk about—so I will to that. I arrived, then, at Baggs's Hotel, in Utica, which (the hotel) has a railroad running *through* it—so you may fancy how pleasant it is—to dinner, and it occurred to me that it was Saturday, that I was only twelve miles from Trenton Falls, and that I had no engagement till Monday evening. To the Falls, then, I would go and spend the Sunday. Mr. Baggs assured me that it was in vain; that Mr. Moore, at Trenton, would not "take anybody in" (so he dubiously phrased it) in winter; and that I should have my cold drive for my pains. I had travelled enough not to take anything for granted, —so I hired a "cutter" and a pair of horses and a huge buffalo-skin coat to drive, and set out. It was snowy and blowy and cold, and part of the way the snow was level with the backs of the horses (Bison-skin had prophesied it, but I did not believe till I saw)—think of it,

on the 24th March! One good remark came out of the bison-skin on the way. A clumsy driver nearly ran into us, upon which Bison-skin, with some preliminary observations which I omit, told his brother Jehu that "he didn't know no more 'n a last year's jackass!" Imagine the state of mind of an *immature* animal of that species!

We drove fast in spite of the deep snow, for we "had the pootiest pair o' colts that went eout o' Utiky," and in about an hour and a half drew up in front of the huge deserted hotel, its dark color looking drearier in contrast with the white snow and under the gathering twilight. I tried the front door in vain. The roll of skins suggested a door below. I went, knocked, and a grave, respectable man in black (looking not the least like an American landlord) opened the door and said, "Good-evening, sir."

"Good-evening, sir. Mr. Moore, I believe?"

"That's my name, sir."

"Can you lodge me till Monday?"

"We do not keep our house open in winter, and prefer to live privately, sir."

This was said in such a quiet way that I saw there was nothing more to be said on the tavern side—so I changed my front.

"I have seen the Falls several times in summer, and thought I should like to see them in their winter fashions. They must be even more beautiful, I fancy. I hoped also to have a quiet Sunday here, after a week's railroading"—and I gave a despairing look at the gloomy weather and the heap of bison-skin.

Mr. Moore loves his Falls, and I had touched him.

"I will ask Mrs. Moore, and see what she says; she will have all the trouble."

He opened a door, said something I could not hear, and instantly a sweet, motherly voice said,

"Certainly, by all means."

"Mrs. Moore says she will be happy to have you stay. Walk in, sir. I will have your luggage attended to."

Meanwhile I had not told Mr. Moore my name, of which (however illustrious) I feared he might never have heard, and there was no mark on trunk or carpet-bag by which he could discover it. Presently we sat down to tea, and I was charmed with the gentle and affectionate atmosphere of the family. There was a huge son and two little girls and a boy—I wish Wendell Holmes could have seen them—the stoutest children I ever saw. Then there was a daughter-in-law—a very sweet-looking girl with her first child, a lovely baby of a year old who never cried. I know that first babies never do—but *he* never *did*. After tea Mr. Moore and I smoked and talked together. I found him a man with tastes for medals, pictures, engravings, music, and fruit culture. He played very well on a parlor-organ, and knew many artists whom I also knew. Moreover, he was a Unitarian. So we got along nicely. Mrs. Moore was handsome and gentle. She was a granddaughter of Roger Sherman. After our cigars Mr. Moore showed me his books, and among others the "Homes of American Authors." He asked me if I had ever seen it. Here was a chance to introduce myself quietly. So I said, "Yes, and I will show you where I live." I showed him ac-

cordingly the print of Elmwood, and he grew more friendly than ever.

I went out in the night to get my first sight of the Falls, refusing to be accompanied and profusely warned of the danger of the ravine's frozen and slippery edges. They were slippery, but I did not tumble in, as you see. (Forgive my chirography. I am writing with tears in my eyes, for my stove smokes worse than common.) As I looked down into the gorge, after wandering through the giant hemlocks, nothing could be finer. The edges of the stream were frozen and covered with light, new-fallen snow, so that by contrast the stream seemed black, wholly black. The night gave mystery to the profound abyss, and I fancied it was the Water of Oblivion I was gazing down at. From afar I heard the murmur of the first fall, and, though I thought I had understood Goethe's "Fisher" as I have sat by the side of the sea, I never had fully till now. I felt again a true poetic enthusiasm revive in me, dead for so long. I feared to stay, there was such an impulse to leap down. For the first time I became conscious of the treachery of the ice-edge, and walked backward cautiously into the wood. Then I made my way among the trees and over fallen hemlock trunks, guided by the increasing murmur to the first fall. I now found (or guessed) why there was so little roar. The fall was entirely muffled in ice. I could just see it through the darkness—a wall, or rather veil, of ice covering it wholly. It was perfectly a frozen waterfall, as I discovered the next morning—for the front of it had thawed in the sun so that it was polished as water and was ribbed and

wrinkled like a cascade, while the heap of snowy *débris* below made the spray. I went back to the house and (charming inconsistency of this double nature of ours!), with the tears scarce dry in my eyes, sat down to smoke another cigar with Mr. Moore and to play Dr. Busby with the children.

Here I was broken off short—and have not had a moment since: I am now at the Burnet House, Cincinnati, and it is Friday, the 12th April. I go on.

In the morning Mr. Moore took me out and showed me the best points of view, after which he considerately left me. It was a cold morning, and the spray, as it rose, crystallized in feathers, as fine as those of a moth, on the shrubs and trees and sides of the gorge. For a few moments the sun shone and lighted up all these delicate ice-ferns, which, in texture, were like those star-shaped flakes that fall from very cold clouds. Afterwards I saw Niagara, but he is a coarser artist, and had plastered all the trees with ice like alabaster. He is a clumsy fellow compared with Cuyahoga. The ice-work along the rocks at Trenton is very lovely. Sometimes it hangs lightly, honeycombed by the sun and bent by the wind from the fall as it froze—looking like the Venetian-lace drapery of an altar. At other times it has frozen in filtering stalactites precisely like organ-pipes. . . .

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Elmwood, May 10, 1855.

My dear Friend,—I ought to have written before, but have been enjoying a short visit to the Castle of

Indolence, where writing-materials are contraband. But since I came home I have read all the back numbers of the *Crayon*, and must tell you how much I like it and what pleasant things I hear said of it. I think your articles are just right—marked as much by *tact* as by ability. Your success, I cannot but think, is now past all question. I cannot say too strongly how deep a pleasure I find in the purity of tone and earnestness of purpose that distinguish what you write. I am proud to have made such a friend.

I saw Longfellow yesterday, and reminded him of his promise to send you a poem—and he renewed it, but said that just now he had not anything he liked well enow to send. I told him that it did not matter for a long poem, and that his *name* would be of service to the *Crayon*, now that it was seeking an introduction to the world. I know that he means rightly, and only hope that he will send you something while it can be of commercial value to you. Don't be shocked at my market-place view of the thing. I feel as wise as a woman when I find anybody with a beard who seems a worse manager than I, and one has a right to be shrewd for his friend.

Meanwhile I send you some verses * of my own, which you may like or not, as you please. They are very much at your service if you want them, and perhaps *Professor* Lowell's name may be of use.

Was there not a poem of your own in the last number? or whose was it? The second one, I mean, without

* "Invita Minerva."

signature. There were some verses in it that pleased me much—but the poem wanted more care. Nobody has a right to puzzle so good a reader as I am, and I was several times in doubt as to meaning.

As soon as we have a leaf or two I shall expect a visit from you. I will write and let you know when our winter is over. Our spring is like that delicacy, a frozen plum-pudding, which cheats every uninitiated person into an impromptu toothache. It *looks* as if it ought to be hot, and *is* Nova Zembla focussed.

Remember me kindly to Mr. Durand, and think of anything I can do for you on the other side. I go to Germany first, and am, everywhere and always,

Affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, May 21, 1855.

My dear Friend,—"It being accordingly granted that the earth is a hollow cube—" "But I beg your pardon, my dear sir, I granted no such thing."

"Well, then, it being necessary to the purposes of this argument that the earth *should be* a hollow cube, which is precisely the same thing, I go on to demonstrate," etc.

Now, what does he mean by saying that your picture is "an *unpleasingly* grouped assemblage of *unpleasing* natural objects"? Is a hemlock trunk unpleasing? Is the silvery-gray boll of a sloping birch unpleasing? Is the beech-stem plashed with wavering pools of watery sunshine unpleasing? And pray tell me how, in a picture, a thing *can* be "literally rendered." There is no

such matter possible. The closer the imitation, in giving rounded and irregular shapes, perspective, etc., on a flat surface, the greater have been the difficulties overcome, and the greater the imagination in being able to see things as they truly are and not as they seem. To make a model of a beech-stem is quite another affair. We would rather have a section of the real thing. Is there not a difference even in daguerreotypes in favor of the man who is enough of an artist to choose the right moment and point of view? And even were the tree-trunk a deformed one; were it ever so ugly, misshapen, warty, scrofulous, carious, what you will—it is one of the curious psychological facts that it is yet *not* unpleasing. For, while any *lusus naturæ* in anything that breathes is hateful, a fanciful resemblance to the diseases and deformities of animal life in anything that merely grows appeals to our sense of the odd, the humorous, the grotesque, or else is not disagreeable because it is a likeness upward and not downward. But this glances towards a deeper deep, and I forbear. Anyhow, I like your picture and the idea of it, only you must make interest with Aquarius to water your lake a little. But,

> "When they talked of their Raphaels, Correggios, and stuff,
> He shifted his trumpet and only took snuff."

Or let me translate a proverb from the Feejee dialect,

> "That which we like likes us:
> No need of any fuss."

Nay, take this other, which I this moment copy from the walls of a house just unburied at Pompeii:

Perchance the thing I banish me expels.
Be chary, Ostracizer, of thy shells!
Madman, thou deem'st thyself sublimely free,
And liest on straw in that cramped cell of thee.

Or, perhaps, this is a better translation of the last couplet:

Thou deem'st thyself a king, poor crazy elf!
Chained to the wall of that cramped cell—thyself.

The Feejee Islanders (who love curried Calvinists and minced missionary) and the Pompeians (who got up such suicidal fireworks for the entertainment of Admiral Pliny) knew a thing or two, nevertheless!

It is a glorious, blue, north-westerly day; the oak-woods are pink with buds; the linnets, catbirds, fire hang-birds, and robins are all singing hymeneals to the Spring, and she trembles through all her wreaths of new-born leaves and seems equally pleased with each of them. She does not say, "Oh, linnet, put yourself to school with *Maestro* Catbird," nor "Be silent, Robin, my boy, till you can sing like Signor Robert of Lincoln." *Per Bacco!* did not brave Masaccio paint St. Peter right in the streets of Florence, working a miracle with vulgar Florentines all about him, and did not Raphael and Michael say that the Brancacci Chapel was their school?

Will you spend Saturday and Sunday with me? I have so many things to do and folks to see that I cannot name an earlier day. But come then or any when, and you shall be welcome.

Tom Appleton's poem only wanted work to be a fine one, and I advise you to print as many more such as

you can lay your hands on. It had the *soul* of poetry in it, anyhow.

I send back the proofs corrected. I am not quite pleased with the verses, but they have a meaning in them.

I shall expect you on Saturday, and till then *addio*.

Always yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, May 21, 1855.

My dear Fields,—It has just got through my skull, and made a dint in my sensorium, that you wrote me a note, ever so long ago, about my lectures and the publication of them. I don't mean to print them yet—nor ever till they are better—but at any rate I consider myself as one of your flock, though not perhaps as lanigerous as some. I don't like being transplanted and having to get newly rooted. I said when I came to you that you should have the offer of whatever I wrote, and I have not forgotten it. There is a great deal of the barnacle (my revered ancestors, according to the Development folks) left in me, and I am not fond of migrations. I stick to my friends—less, perhaps, from virtue than laziness—but I stick.

I only wish my books were more profitable to both of us—but at any rate it will be long before I twitch my professional *gownd* and say, "To-morrow to fresh Fields and Ticknors new."

I ought by this time to have been in Boston, and so *addio*.

Yours ever,

J. R. Lowell.

TO C. E. NORTON

London, Aug. 11, 1855.

. . . Well, what have I been doing and what am I doing in London? I spent nearly three weeks (rather dull ones) in Paris, and am come hither to see the Storys, whom I otherwise might never have seen again. It has been a good thing for me. The climate agrees with me, and I feel better than for a long time. I thought I had a right to a vacation, now that the *other Professors* are having theirs. (I have not got used to that confounded title yet.)

I was heartily tired of Paris. I used to think of what good old Mr. Sales said about his father-in-law, "Paris is not just the place for a deacon, you know, by Sheorge!" However, the Louvre was always fine, and I went thither nearly every day. I was never tired of sitting in front of a portrait by Titian there, and trying to make out the history in that face, so young and yet so full of experience, of sadness, and above all, resolve. I made up my mind that I would rather have it than any other picture in the world—yes, rather than my favorite "Presentation of the Virgin" in Venice. I shall try to get a photograph of it. It was also a great pleasure to me that I discovered Rembrandt—not all of him, but his mastery in portrait. Surely in this he comes next to the great Venetians. I say not all of him—for I had not then seen his "Jacob's Dream," at Dulwich College. It is full of imagination and grandeur—and yet perfectly Dutch, too, for Jacob is nothing but a Flemish peasant, even to the costume. But those wondrous angels! There are only

two, and yet they are enough—so dim and dreamy and majestic they are, and one thinks he can make out hosts of them in that darkling glory behind. It is just a brown heath, with one brown dream of a tree, under which lies a brown Jacob. Everything is brown but the two gray angels, both draped below the feet, and with such soft, such silent wings—yet so full of sweep and sustentation! Henceforward I am to be thankful for another great genius. We met Browning and his wife there, and Browning pointed out to us some reeds behind Jacob, evidently scratched in with the handle of the brush, showing how rapidly it had been painted. Another picture which interested me was a portrait of Lady Venetia Digby, by Vandyke. It seems painted after death. She lies on a pillow, pale, and with flowers strewn about her. I was glad to show Mrs. Browning the likeness of a woman who had inspired so noble and enduring a love in so remarkable a man as Sir Kenelm. She is always associated in my mind with Beatrice and with the better part of my life. Sometimes I think, my dear Norton, there are no happinesses like our sad regretful ones. Joy and sorrow are sisters surely, and very like each other too, or else both would not bring tears as they do equally. And this reminds me of Tennyson's "Maud," which I think wonderfully fine—the antiphonal voice to "In Memoriam." I tried to read it aloud, but broke down in the middle in a subdued passion of tears. . . .

I will go back to Paris. The *Beaux Arts* part of the Exposition was interesting and instructive. I saw Descamps and Rousseau in full force, and the *décolleté* school also. All French art nowadays—almost all—is more or

less so. I like Rousseau. He has a true love of Nature and confidence in her, and will make a landscape out of a little pool of water and a few reeds, just as she does. But the pictures that interested me most were by a man I had never heard of—named Hamon. His "Théâtre Guignol" is very striking. It is a little Punch theatre, where Cupid, Minerva, etc., are the puppets. You see behind the grim head of the showman. In front stands Dante taking notes sadly. Homer approaches led by a little boy. Æschylus is also there and the great heroes. Socrates sits on a bench with the children, who alone weep at the tragedy. Diogenes is just retreating to his tub, disgusted that he cannot find a man. How fine that is, with all these great ones around him! In this man's pictures, a Teutonic soul seems to have entered into French art. I cannot find much meaning—indeed, no deep one—in any of their painters since Nicolas Poussin. I like *him* as well as ever. By the way, there is a delicious picture of his at Wilton House, where I was yesterday. Were you ever there? *I* was yesterday —only yesterday. I can hardly believe it here in the smoke of London, with some musicians howling and drumming under my windows. It was there that Sidney wrote his "Arcadia"—and it was a fit place for a picture by the man who painted the *Et ego in Arcadiâ*. That was my first exclamation when I entered the court-yard. I think, next to Fountain's Abbey, it is the most *charming* thing I have seen in England—and just after Stonehenge, too; the contrast was so fine. The day was kind to us also. At Stonehenge it was gray and solemn, without a gleam of sun, and with a wild wind sighing

across the bleak heath. At Wilton it was all sunlight and cloud-shadow, and the noble cedars on the lawn gloomed grandly over the close-clipped sward which in England makes up (with its bright yellow-green) for sunshine when there is none. Some of the finest Vandykes I have ever seen are there, reminding me (as the rooms did also, for they are quite Italian) of the Colonna Palace in Rome. But I am running on too far. I must only tell you of one wonderful thing I saw in France—the Cathedral of Chartres. It is very grand—with mossy saints and angels looking down upon you out of that hoary, inaccessible past. It is the home now of innumerable swallows and sparrows, who build upon the shoulders of those old great ones—as we little folks do too, I am afraid. Even here I found the Norman—for when I mounted to the spire I saw numbers of hawks who dwell in the higher parts, as in their castles, and prey on the poor Saxons below. *Per Bacco!* how little heed nature pays to our theories and our Jean Jacques Rousseaus! I never heard finer music than the wind made among the stone chords of the spire. . . .

It is to-morrow now, for I had to break off there, and it is really the 11th August now. I dated my letter wrongly. . . .

Well, since I wrote what is above, I have got my passport in order, and spent an hour with Leigh Hunt, who told me as a pleasant thing that his copy of my poems had been carried off and never brought back, and that he had vainly tried to get the book from the London Library, but it was always out. He talked of Byron, and he told me a good thing his wife said on seeing Byron's

portrait (before seeing him)—that "he looked like a boy to whom a plain bun had been given when he expected a plum one." Carlyle, he said, was hugely tickled with this.

. . . Thackeray gave us (Story, Cranch — whom I brought over from Paris—and me) a dinner at the Garrick Club. The place is full of pictures of actors and actresses, some of them admirable—one of Garrick as Macbeth, for example—especially those by Zoffany. The dinner was very funny. Thackeray had ordered it for *two*, and was afraid there would not be enough—an apprehension which he expressed very forcibly to the waiter. He said something to Story which pleased me wonderfully. There were some cutlets which *did* look rather small. "Eat one of 'em, Story," said he; "it will make you feel a little hungry at first, but you'll *soon* get over it." The benevolent tone he gave to the *soon* was delightfully comic. After dinner, we went to a room over the "Cyder Cellar" to smoke. Thackeray called for a glass of gin and water, and presently sent for the last "Newcomes," saying that he would read us the death of Colonel Newcome. While he was reading, came in a tall man in his shirt-sleeves, and cried, "Well, Thack, I've read your last number. Don't like it. It's a failure. Not so good as the rest!" This was Maurice John O'Connell. Thackeray was not at all disturbed, but sent him off cavalierly. While reading one of the worst tirades of the "Campaigner" he interrupted himself to say, "That's my she-devil of a mother-in-law, you know, whom I have the good-luck to possess still." I complained of his marrying Clive and Ethel as an artistic blunder. He acknowl-

edged that it was so. "But then, you see, what could a fellow do? So many people wanted 'em married. To be sure, I had to kill off poor little Rosey rather suddenly, but shall not a man do what he will with his own? Besides, we can hope they won't have any children."

I see that I must come to an end. I have been living here in London at No. 1 Bulstrode St.—out of Welbeck St.—*chez* Madame James, a very civil Swiss woman. They give me my breakfast, and I get a chop at the Mitre Tavern for my dinner. Let me recommend the Mitre. The great Elizabethan wits used to go there, and Dr. Johnson afterwards. His bust overlooks you there, dingy with the steam of many generations of dinner. Besides all this, the chops are the best in London. It beats the "Cock and Dolly's." In Paris I devoted myself to the public good, and tried many restaurants. *My* verdict is for Véfour, in the Palais Royal. It is as good as the "Trois Frères" and Véry—cheaper—and they give more *champignons* than anybody else. If you had been with me in Paris, I would have gone down to half the cathedral-towns (this is *à propos*, you observe, of chops and *cafés*) of France. As it was, I had not spirit enough. But Chartres was almost enough in itself for a lifetime. The day, also, was superb—clear and lucent, with a great white cloud here and there to make the blue companionable for the imagination, and to dapple the green landscape with shadow. . . .

. . . On the whole I find myself much as usual. I learn more or less every day, but never to hold my tongue as much as I ought, nor not to throw away

money when I have any in my pocket. Also I smoke dreadfully, and very bad cigars.

Give my love to Longfellow, and tell him that to know him is to be somebody over here. As the author of various esteemed works I am nothing in particular; but as his neighbor—it is as good as knowing a lord. England is full of his admirers, but advise him never to come hither, for I have a fancy that poets consume their adorers by showing themselves to them—as the god burnt up Semele. I flatter myself there is a good *simile* made of *Semele*. Perhaps that is why I said it—and professed myself of that opinion. I do not think there is any special danger in Longfellow's case. Give my love also to Mrs. Longfellow. I suppose I may say at this distance, without blushing, how much I admire and value her. For dignity, I think of her and the Venus of Milo together.

This is a tremendous letter, but perhaps it will be long enough before you get another. So don't be scared. Don't forget me to Appleton and Curtis. Tell Kensett that his cigars were admirable. I had twenty left when I got to Paris, which I divided with Cranch. *Addio*. . . .

TO MISS LORING

No. 4, Kleine Schiessgasse,
Dresden, Oct. 3, 1855.

. . . I am beim Herrn Hofrath Dr. Reichenbach, who is one of the kindest of men, and Madame is a "first-rate fullah" too, as my nephew Willie would say. I have a large room *am Parterre*, with a glass door opening upon a pretty garden. My walls are hung with very nice

pictures painted by the *gnädige Frau* herself; and they were so thoughtful as to send down before I came a large case with American birds very well stuffed and mounted, so that I might have some friends. Some of them are very familiar, and I look at the oriole sometimes till I hear him whistling over the buttercups in the dear old times at Elmwood. Ah, how deep out of the past his song comes! But *hin ist hin, verloren ist verloren!* Then I have one of those solemn ceremonials, a German bed—with a feather-bed under which I engrave myself at night and dream that I am awaiting the last trump. Then I have the prettiest writing-table, bought *exprès pour moi* by Madame, *weil ich ein Dichter bin*—and at which I am now sitting—with drawers for everything and nothing. I rack my brains for what to put in 'em. I am fast turning into a "regular" German, according to the definition of that Italian innkeeper at Amalfi, who told me, speaking of a man that was drowned, "bisognerebbe che fosse un Tedesco perchè sempre stava a casa, e non faceva niente che fumare e studiare." I get up *um sieben Uhr*, and das Mädchen brings me my coffee and *Butterbrod* at 8. Then I begin to study. I am reading for my own amusement (du lieber Gott!) the *aesthetische Forschungen von* Adolf Zeising, pp. 568, large octavo! Then I overset something aus German into English. Then comes dinner at 1 o'clock, with *ungeheuer* German dishes. *Nachmittag* I study Spanish with a nice young Spaniard who is in the house, to whom I teach English in return. *Um sechs Uhr ich gehe spazieren*, and at 7 come home, and Dr. R. dictates and I write. Aber potztausend Donnerwetter!

what a language it is to be sure! with nominatives sending out as many roots as that witch-grass which is the pest of all child-gardens, and sentences in which one sets sail like an admiral with sealed orders, not knowing where the devil he is going to till he is in mid-ocean! Then, after tea, we sit and talk German—or what some of us take to be such—and which I speak already like a native—of some other country. But Madame R. is very kind and takes great pains to set me right. The confounded genders! If I die I will have engraved on my tombstone that I died of *der*, *die*, *das*, not because I caught 'em, but because I couldn't. Dr. R. is one of the most distinguished Naturwissenschaftsgelehrten (! !) in Europe—a charming, friendly, simple-hearted man. I attend his Vorlesungen und *etwas* verstehe. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Dresden, Monday, Oct. 12, 1855.

. . . Whitman—I remember him of old; he used to write for the *Democratic Review* under O'Sullivan. He used to do stories then, *à la* Hawthorne. No, no, the kind of thing you describe won't do. When a man aims at originality he acknowledges himself consciously unoriginal, a want of self-respect which does not often go along with the capacity for great things. The great fellows have always let the stream of their activity flow quietly—if one splashes in it he may make a sparkle, but he muddies it too, and the good folks down below (I mean posterity) will have none of it. We have a feeling of quiet and easy-going power in the really great that makes us willing to commit ourselves with them.

Sometimes I have thought that Michel Agnolo cocked his hat a little wee bit too much, but after seeing his Prophets and Sybils (i y) you'll say I'm a wretch. It is not the volcanoes, after all, that give a lasting and serene delight, but those quiet old giants without a drop of fireblood in their veins that lie there basking their unwarmable old sides in the sun no more everlasting than they—patent unshiftable ballast that keep earth and human thought trimmed and true on an even keel. Ah, the cold-blooded old monsters, how little they care for you and me! Homer, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Cervantes, Goethe—are they not everlasting boundary-stones that mark the limits of a noble reserve and self-restraint, and seem to say, "Outside of us is Chaos—go there if you like—*we* knew better—it is a dreary realm where moan the ghosts of dead-born children, and where the ghost of mad old Lear is king"?

My dear Norton, upon my word I am not giving you an extract from my next lecture. . . .

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Dresden, Oct. 14, 1855.

My dear Friend,—You may lay it to anything you like except my having forgotten you that I have not written sooner. I have thought of you only too much, for I wished when I wrote to send you something for the *Crayon*, and not finding aught to write about, you began to haunt me and to shake your printer's-inky locks at me—only, unhappily, the case was just the reverse of Banquo's, since thou couldst say I'd *not* done it. Now this would not do. I would not have a friend-

ship which I valued so much—more than any contracted in these later years—associated with any uneasy thought. So I resolved to lay the ghost at once—as we can all *blue* ghosts that haunt us—in a sea of ink. What have I to say now that I had not a month ago? Nothing—but then I will manfully write and say so. I can at least tell you how warm and strong a feeling I have towards you, and that is something. But for the *Crayon?* That we will see presently. First, I must thank you for the likeness of yourself, which you may be sure I am glad to have with me, and for your letters. Only why so short? One would think you were writing across Broadway instead of the Atlantic; but I will give it a good turn by thinking that you do not feel me far away from you, as I truly am not. About Griswold and the rest of it I understand nothing and care as little, unless for its troubling you. When I get over here it is the Styx that is between me and America. I have drunk Lethe water to wash down nepenthe with, and have forgotten everything but my friends, like a happy Shade. What care we careless Spirits for what troubled us—still more for what might have troubled us in the flesh? "My little man," says Wordsworth to Pope, when they meet in the Fortunate Islands, "I am sorry to say"—the wretch! he is not sorry a bit—"that your poems are not so much read as once." "My what? ah, poems—yes, I think I *did* write some things once. And so they don't read 'em, eh? 'Tis all one for that—I wouldn't read 'em myself. Come in here with me, Mr.—a—a—I beg your pardon—ah, Woodwarth? Yes, come in, Mr. Woodwarth, and try the Lethe; 'tis the best spring in

the place, and you will meet some eminent characters in the pump-room." So it goes. Give yourself no more trouble about the picture; as it is one, I suppose I may say *hang* the picture! But I dare be sworn you have forgotten all about it by this time.

But for the *Crayon*—what have I seen? Why, I have seen the Van Eyck at Ghent, and liked it so well that I have never a word to say about it. And I saw the Memlings at Bruges—what a place it is! a bit of Italy drifted away northward, and stranded like an erratic bowlder in Flanders—and I liked those so well that I am equally dumb thereanent. And I saw the Rubenses in Antwerp, which have all been skinned alive by the restorers, and which they have put into a little room fenced off from the Cathedral, so that they may get a franc out of every stranger who comes there—the Jews! "Is not my Father's house a house of prayer? But ye have made it a den of thieves." There has been great power and passion in those pictures—Rubens is a poem translated out of Low Dutch into Italian; but in the little dog-hole where they are one cannot see them. What was meant to be seen at forty feet shall one see at fifteen? Offer a man a magnifying-glass to look at an elephant with! Somehow I feel inclined always to say, "He was a great *gentleman*, that Rubens"—but great *man* seems a little too much. But great he surely was in some sense or other—you feel *that*. Then I saw all the Dutch pictures at The Hague; but I think that Rembrandt, the greatest imagination those Low Countries ever produced, is better seen here in Dresden than at The Hague. As for Paul Potter's famous "Bull," it is

no more to be compared with Rosa Bonheur's "Horse Fair" than a stuffed and varnished dolphin with a living one. Here there are some wonderful pictures. Titian's "Tribute-money" is marvellously great; the head of Christ the noblest and most pathetic I have ever seen—full of a magnificent sadness. There is also a truly delicious Claude—a deep, rock-imbedded bay so liquidly dark and cool! There is a Holy Family by Holbein, too, poetically prosaic. I forgot to speak of an Albert Dürer at The Hague—a portrait of the future emperor (Maximilian, I think) as a child of three years, with an apple in his hand instead of the globe of empire, which was afterwards, if I remember, so heavy to him. Is it not a pretty fancy? But I have really got something for the *Crayon*—*this* is not—but must wait till next week's mail—an account of a visit I made to Retzsch. It is late now, and I am not in a good mood neither. I have heard bad news—not of Mabel, thank God!

You might make an item of this—that the King of Saxony allows no copies to be made in the gallery, in order that the artists here may choose original subjects and paint out of their own experience. Also Bendemann (their best painter here) is making a good picture —very pure and classic—out of the meeting of Ulysses with Nausicaa in the Odyssey. But I must say good-night and God bless you! I have so much writing of German to do that my eyes can't bear much night-work, and it is near twelve. Sunday is my only holiday. Next week, then.

Ever your affectionate friend,

J. R. Lowell.

I hope the *Crayon* prospers, though it is almost too good for that. Write me, when you are not overworked.

TO C. E. NORTON

Wednesday Morning, 1856.

. . . Cranch is a good fellow, with gifts enough for three — only his fairy left the *brass* out when she brought her gifts to his cradle. Foolish fairy! for men can change brass for gold all the world over, as far as I have observed, and I take it for granted in Jupiter also. If a man have brass enough of his own he has no difficulty in getting as much *æs alienum* as he wants.

There is no lecture to-day because this is Mittwoche, so I have time to scold a little. Don't you see that you are very unphilosophical to complain in that way about the modern painters? It is not for want of genius. There is more power and more imagination in that great picture of Couture's than in all the old Italians put together, leaving out the four greatest. Those old fellows owed an immense deal to costume. It is just as it is with the old poets. The second-rate fellows of two centuries ago had a material that we have no longer. The language itself was more poetic, and they accordingly sometimes say a very commonplace thing in a way to bring tears into one's eyes or make the roots of one's hair creep. The great merit, it seems to me, of the old painters was that they did not try to be original. To say a thing, says Goethe, that everybody has said before, as quietly as if no one had ever said it, *that* is orig-

inality. Then the modern school is sensual where the old one was sensuous. It is perfectly shocking to see how much nakedness for nakedness' sake there is in that Exposition. It is no longer Saint Luke but the Dame aux Camélias that presides over the painters' guild. I could say ever so much to account for it—nay, to excuse it, bad as it all is—but it would be going too deep and too far for the few lines I have left. And where are the old landscapes comparable to ours? Claude is great, but he had no imagination—and Turner is great, almost in spite of himself, because he had so much. But even in him there are few touches like the boy launching his shingle-boat in the "Building of Carthage." Keep your eyes wide open when you are in Italy and see what weak-kneed giants some of those old Italians were. And especially see Hamon again and the præ-Raphaelites. Hunt's "Angelo (?) and Isabella" is full of power and passion—*Claudio* I mean. *Vixêre fortes* post *Agamemnona*. I sha'n't bother you with another letter for ever so long, and don't be worried to answer this. . . .

TO THE SAME

Dresden, Jan. 3, 1856.

My dear Charles,— . . . You don't find my letters very wise? Then I will turn over a new leaf.

When, from the always bleak and often cloudy summits of Experience, my dear Norton, we look down upon the varied passions and activities of man, we find—that it is impossible to go on any longer in *that* strain. So, my dear Charles, I wheel about and come back to my own natural self, of which, good, bad, or indifferent, I hope my

letters will always have the merit of being for the moment a perfectly true reflection. He cannot be a wise man who never says a foolish thing, and, indeed, I go further, and affirm that it takes a wise man to say a foolish thing. So much in answer to your unseemly imputations. And while I am scolding, I will do it all at one breath, and ask why you did not as usual send me the regards of the rest of the family, which I always value and always depend upon receiving? You are now sufficiently humiliated to read the rest of my letter in a proper spirit.

It always happens somehow that when I have a particularly bad day, then comes a letter out of Italy and gives me a longing that always sends me off on a twilight walk in the *grosses Gehäge*—a great solemn meadow in the neighborhood of Dresden, with long rows of lindens planted by Augustus the Strong. There in the cutting wind and under the cold stars I gather courage again. I am as well off here as it is possible to wish, but I don't like it—and that makes all the difference in the world.

One of my earliest associations is with the Bridge of Augustus at Narni—a print of which hangs in our dining-room; and the words *Veduta del ponte d'Augusto sopra la Nera a Narni* were familiar to my eye long before I knew their meaning, and I can see them and the picture printed clearly on the air before me when I close my lids. I spent a happy summer day and night there. *Heu quantum minus est. . . .*

I fear I shall not get to Italy. I cannot tell till March —it will depend on my progress in German. I am an

officer, you know, sent out on a particular service, and not to amuse myself. I have made some headway—can read German almost as easily as French. That is already something. Meanwhile, my studies do me good. My brain is clear and my outlook over life seems to broaden. I am tormented with a tremulous nervousness sometimes—especially on Wednesday, when I expect letters from home—but hope to find I have harvested something when I get home into the quiet again. You must excuse it if it juts through into my letters sometimes—or always.

But if we cannot meet in Italy, can't we somewhere else? . . .

Your affectionate

J. R. L.

TO JOHN HOLMES

Dresden, Jan., 1856.

My dear John,— . . . Here is an inscription I copied for you in a village inn:

"Fürchte Gott	Fear thou God
So wirst du selig!	And thou'lt be holy!
Trinke Bier	Drink thou beer
So wirst du fröhlich!	And thou'lt be jolly!
D'rum fürchte Gott	So fear thou God
und	and
Trinke Bier,	Drink thou beer,
So wirst du selig	And thou'lt be holy
und	and
Fröhlich hier!"	Jolly here!

Around the room, just as in our farm-houses and coun-

try-taverns, hung samplers and urns with *very* weeping willows—also writing-exercises of the children—consisting of copies of verses addressed to the mother. There were silhouettes, too, of all the family, and one of the landlord in his youth as a trooper—painted bright blue and with a very long gilded sword—in a ferociously murderous attitude. This was a lithograph, and you must know that they are sold at all the fairs and serve indifferently for any unfortunate who is drawn for a soldier, the only difference being in the names written underneath. The landlord was delightfully unlike his picture, having grown enormously fat, and scarce able to rise from his corner by the great stove and pull off his little skull-cap to say "Your most obedient servant, sir." Here is another inscription from the same place. It is not an uncommon one and is very pleasing:

"Bis hierher hat Gott geholfen,
Gott hilft noch—
Und Gott wird weiter helfen."

Hitherto hath God still holpen,
God helps yet—
And God will farther help us.

But there is a peculiarity here that exists, I think, nowhere else, and that is the column of private announcements in the *Anzeiger*—a paper devoted wholly to advertisements. Here people inform the public of their marriage, of deaths in the family, lovers make assignations, friends wish each other joy on their birthdays. E. g.: "To-day at three o'clock in the morning ended,

after a short but most painful illness, our good mother, sister, and aunt, Mrs. Ernestine Caroline, widowed apothecary Wehner, born Uhlich. Whoever knew the worth of the blessed gone-to-sleep will measure our great pain and not refuse a silent sympathy. Dresden, 10 Jan., 1856. Rudolph Wehner, pianist, in the name of the other left-behinds." (I translate literally.) The next is probably from one of the guild of Mary hight Magdalene: "To Henry Held a thrice-thundering-health on his to-day 33d birthday! [cradle-feast]. Marie H." This is from a dependant or poor relation, I surmise: "To Madame W. Schwarze, on her to-day's cradle-feast, offers congratulations with all respect. M. G." Here is an anonymous one: "Mr. Mez is requested not to mix himself in other people's affairs, though he is a suitor of Miss E. Besides, he has very much deceived himself. All is not gold that glisters."

All these I have copied out of the same paper. Here is another specimen: "The this morning at 3 o'clock happily accomplished delivery of his wife of a healthy Boy announces earnestly hereby to worthy friends and acquaintances—the Director Z. F. Zencke." "This forenoon God made us a present [literal] of a lusty daughterkin. Julius and Theresa Zäkel." "As newly married present their compliments, Theodore Roack, practical physician, and Clara Roack, born Drescher." Sometimes the advertisements have a German thoroughness about them that is quite amusing. I enclose one at random. . . .

Ever yours affectionately,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Dresden (no notion of the date, but some day in January, 1856).

My dear Charles,— . . . The study of German widens so before me—the history of the literature is so interesting and, by its harmonies and discords with our own, sets so many things in a white light for me, that I see infinite work and satisfaction ahead. I wish to *do* this branch of my tree of knowledge thoroughly—even to picking the *gnarly* fruit—before I climb out and risk my brains on another. But I have such an unutterable longing for Italy, such a heavy ground-swell sets in upon my heart when I think of it—and any trifle is enough to whirl all my thoughts in that direction—that I now have a plan of running down and back in March. Your mention of Page blew up in one grand explosion all the ramparts I had been painfully [erecting] against my hopes and wishes, and I am left defenceless again. . . . You must remember that I have been living in the most profound solitude all winter, without a human creature to talk to, having in literal fact seen nobody but Doctor and Madame R., and talking to them always in German or French. They tell me nobody ever learnt German so fast—which is no wonder, for I have done nothing else.

I see that Rome has already begun to infect you. People always begin by wondering what other people find in the old Rookery, and end by saying that there are so many Thises and Thats, but there is only one Rome—which, however, is a mistake, for there is another in the State of New York, and in much better

repair. I say this to show you that I have learned a little of the German thoroughness of investigation.

But really can it be possible that I dream once more of *being* there? I can hardly believe it—and if I did not think it would do me good, both physically and mentally, I would not even dream if I could help it. It would freshen up my Italian, which has fallen frightfully into abeyance here—so that I have a *professional* reason. It takes me a great while to learn that I have a tether round my leg—I who have been used to gallop over the prairies at will—and I find myself brought up now and then with a sharp jerk that is anything but pleasant to the *tibia*. But I suppose I shall learn to stand quietly up to my manger at last. Shall I come? . . .

Affectionately yours,

IL PROFESSORE.

TO DR. ESTES HOWE

Dresden, Feb. 4, 1856.

My dear Doctor,— . . . The greatest event that has recently taken place here I will relate. There are Court Balls once a fortnight which Dr. Reichenbach is expected to attend—and also to attend in uniform. This uniform (Madame being a wonderful housekeeper) is packed carefully as soon as he comes home, to await its next day of service. The trousers are of white broadcloth, and these are carefully turned inside out. Now, you must know that if our dear Doctor gets to thinking of any point in Natural History—particularly if he has heard of a new humming-bird, he becomes wholly unconscious of the outward world. For this reason he is al-

ways obliged to pass in review before Madame when he is going anywhere—a ceremony he is a little impatient under and tries to escape from in a blind, blundering kind of way, like one of his own beetles. On the occasion in question he was interrupted by Madame, just as he was triumphantly setting forth with his cocked hat under his arm, his rapier at his side, and—his trousers on wrong side out, the pockets fluttering on each hip as if the herald Mercury had buckled his talaria on too high up! Fancy his arrival at the palace and his obeisance to majesty! He is one of the most charming of men, learned, superstitious, whimsical, and amiable. . . .

Your affectionate brother,

J. R. L.

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Dresden, Feb. 18, 1856.

My dear Friend,—I reproach myself bitterly for not having sooner answered your letter—but what is the use of spurring an already beaten-out horse? what energy can self-reproaches communicate to a man who has barely resolution enough to do what is absolutely necessary for the day, and who shoves everything else over into the never-coming To-morrow? To say all in one word, I have been passing a very wretched winter. I have been out of health and out of spirits—gnawed a great part of the time by an insatiable home-sickness, and deprived of my usual means of ridding myself of bad thoughts by putting them into verse, for I have felt always that I was here for the specific end of learning German and not of pleasing myself.

Just now I am better in body and mind. My cure has been wrought by my resolving to run away for a month into Italy. Think of it—Italy! I shall see Page and Norton and the grave of our dear little Walter. I can hardly believe that I am going, and in ten days.

What you tell me about the *Crayon* you may be sure fills me with a very sincere regret. It does not need to tell you how much interest I took in it and you—and, what is better, my interest in it was not that merely of a friend of yours, but sprung from a conviction that it would do much for the æsthetic culture of our people. I am very sorry on every account that it is to be given up. I had hoped so much from it. It is a consolation to me to think that you will be restored to the practice instead of the criticism and exposition of Art, and that we shall get some more pictures like the one which took so strong a hold of me in the New York Exhibition. I shall hope to become the possessor of one myself after I get quietly settled again at Elmwood, with the Old Man of the Sea of my first course of lectures off my shoulders. You must come and make me a visit, and I will show you some nice studies of landscape in our neighborhood, and especially one bit of primitive forest that I know within a mile and a half of our house.

I have been studying like a dog—no, dogs don't study —I mean a learned pig—this winter, and I think my horizon has grown wider, and that when I come back I shall be worth more to my friends. I have learned the boundaries of my knowledge, and *Terra Incognita*

does not take up so much space on my maps. In German, I have every reason to be satisfied with my progress—though I should have learned more of the colloquial language if I had had spirits enough to go into any society. But I have literally seen nobody but the inmates of our own household and my books. But already the foreboding of Italy fills me with new life and soul. I feel as if I had been living with no outlook on my south side, and as if a wall had been toppled over which darkened all my windows in that direction. Bodily and spiritually I have suffered here with the cold. But God be thanked, it will soon be over.

My great solace (or distraction) has been the Theatre, which is here excellent. I not only got a lesson in German, but have learned much of the technology of the stage. For historical accuracy in costume and scenery I have never seen anything comparable. An artistic nicety and scrupulousness extends itself to the most inconsidered trifles in which so much of illusion consists, and which commonly are so bungled as to draw the attention instead of evading it by an absorption in the universal.

If I had known that I was going to London, I should have been extremely pleased to make the acquaintance of Ruskin. But my journey thither was sudden and flighty, and I saw nobody except Hogarth, Turner, and Rembrandt. Hogarth's "Marriage à la Mode" and Rembrandt's "Jacob's Dream," at Dulwich College, gave me invaluable suggestions.

It will not be long now, I hope, before I see you at

Elmwood—for you must make me a visit as soon as I get warm in my Italy again. It is all *Berg ab* now, and I shall ere long feel the swing of our Atlantic once more. The very thought revives me. We sea-board fellows cannot live long without snuffing salt-water. Let me hear from you in Italy—tell me what you are painting, and all about yourself. As soon as I am myself again I shall try to make my friendship of some worth to you, but always

I am your affectionate friend,

J. R. L.

TO MRS. ESTES HOWE

Naples, April 18, 1856.

My dear Lois,—I have no particular reason for dating this letter as I have, except that 18th sounds as well as anything else, for I have no idea of the true day of the month. Since I have been in Italy I have cared nothing about calendars. I cannot tell you how much my journey has done for me — that and the being with friends. I am quite another man—the color has come back to my cheeks, and I seem to have had all my standing-rigging braced and tautened, like a ship after getting to sea.

I ought long ago to have reported progress, but I expected before now to have been back again in dreary Dresden, with nothing better to do than to tell what I was not doing. Ever since I have heard Italian spoken again my spirits have been on the rise, and with them my health has improved.

I will just tell you where I have been. First Venice

—then by rail to Verona—thence by rail to Mantova. There I hired a vettura to take me to Parma—thence by vettura to Bologna, through Reggio and Modena, sleeping at Modena. From Bologna by vettura again to Ravenna, and thence to Florence. There I hired another to take me up at Siena (to which by rail), and take me on to Orvieto, through Chiusi. At Orvieto I found Norton, Page, and Field, who had come out to meet me, and who took me on to Rome. I contrived it so as to go over routes which I had missed before, and feel now as if I knew Central Italy tolerably well. While at Rome I went out again to Subiaco (which you remember I did before, and found the landlady at Palestrina as droll as ever). To Naples I came with the Putnams, who had a spare seat in their carriage, and wished Mabel had been there to see the *postiglioni*, of whom she used to be so fond, for we did the journey in smacking style, a part of the way at a rate of twelve miles the hour—horses at full gallop. Now I am going over for a few days to Sicily under very good auspices, for Mr. Black, who goes with us, has a letter to the Marquis of Castel Cicala, lieutenant governor of the island, who will perhaps make the roads plainer for us.

I have reached such a pitch of Teutonic intelligence that I use a German guide-book altogether—so that I shall not quite forget all I have learned before I go back to Germany. The weather here is like a Medea's bath, fit to make an old man young again. I never saw anything finer. Don't quite forget me. I shall be back soon now, and incline very strongly to sail early in July. But that will depend a little on circumstances. Good-

by, God keep you all. Give my love to everybody, and always believe me

Your loving brother, J. R. L.

We are just starting to climb Vesuvius.

TO C. E. NORTON

Dresden, June 8, 1856.

. . . I got back day before yesterday. . . . My journey on the whole was a very pleasant one. . . . It was delightful to me to reverse the usual sensation and to pass from Southern into friendly and familiar Northern vegetation. How I exulted when I saw trees whose cousins grow in Massachusetts! And yet was there ever anything more lovely than the laburnums, whose pensive blossoms drooped from every crag around Lago Lugano, and whose shadows, etherealized and deepened, wavered in the smooth waters below like images in a poet's mind, familiar and yet novel? I thought there never was anything so fine, but when I saw the firs and pines and mountain-ashes, I felt what a Northerner and homely soul I was, and that the South is, after all, only an exile to me. . . .

I am taking as kindly as I can to German again, and mean to be at home, if I can, by the 1st August. I have not forgotten so much as I feared, nor do I know as much as I hoped, in German; but I am too old, and I wonder I learned so much when I think what a wretched creature I was all last winter. Germany is full of birds and flowers now, and Italy has moved north, as she does every summer. . . .

Always affectionately yours,

The Hospodar.

TO DR. ESTES HOWE

Dresden, June 9, 1856.

My dear Doctor,— . . . I shall hardly expect to know my native Cambridge when I come back—what with railroads and water-works. But you can't do *much* harm to the dear old sleepy town, and I am glad it is not a puffing and screaming railroad at any rate. Horses are a good old institution and at least can't blow up. The water-works I have no manner of conception of. Whence is the water to come? Where is the reservoir to be? And will a pipe run through Elmwood lane and cut off all the roots of the ash-trees? Will there be any fountains? Will it be against the law to mix anything with the water?

As for your politics over there, I am in despair. I cannot understand anything about them. They talk much of a war between America and England, but I hope no such horrible atrocity will come to pass. Kansas seems in a bad way, and the last thing I read was about the assault upon Sumner, which shocked me more than I can tell. There never was anything so brutal. How long are such things to be borne? And in the midst of it Massachusetts repeals the Personal Liberty Bill — eats 'umble-pie, and takes back the only thing worthy of herself she has done for years. As I read these things so far away, it seems as if I were reading the history of a republic in the last wretched convulsion before absolute dissolution. Yet I believe that it will somehow be turned to good, and that out of this fermenting compost heap of all filthy materials a finer

plant of Freedom is to grow. But when? How does Massachusetts take this slap in the face? . . .

Ever affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO MISS NORTON

Dresden, June 21, 1856.

. . . I am sadly disappointed that I shall not meet you in München, but it would be a long detour and I think you are wise. I held my word and did not go to München—though I was within two hours of it—and only stopped a day at Nürnberg, of which I shall have some nice photographs to show you when you get home. I number it the third among picturesque cities, Venice and Brûges being before it. I take it the test of a city's picturesqueness is its not depending on its position—for in that case we must thank nature and not man. Where man without nature's help, and perhaps to make up for the want of it, has made something which prevents that want from suggesting itself to us, he has achieved the picturesque. It is true, a sluggish river runs through the town—not runs, but sleeps through it—and such a dream as they have contrived to give him in his sleep in the gables and balconies and spires and weather-cocks photographed on his muddy old brain—so fantastic, so middle-agey (I begin to like middle-aged things; the barber told me I was getting gray, and proved it—I shall employ another in future), so everything out of the ordinary current of his thoughts! Then the churches, and the carvings, and the painted glass, and the finest bronze I have seen except the doors in Florence, and the walls

with Albert Dürer's towers, and such a cataract of ivy falling over them as was never seen! The difference between Augsburg and Nürnberg is that between the account of a dream at breakfast, where one is surrounded by prose, and the dream itself. I don't believe the Germans know how precious Nürnberg is, because the people who lived there couldn't write *Von* before their names, although they produced more art (Dürer and Sachs) than all the rest of Germany put together, besides licking thoroughly the accumulated *Vons* of two neighboring dukedoms. The day I spent in Nürnberg I walked over the whole town and half round the walls on the outside, and pleased myself with thinking what a capital *cicerone* I should be when I saw it with you. Catch me studying up another town for such faithless persons! . . .

TO MRS. ESTES HOWE

Dresden, July 2, 1856.

. . . I am a great deal better than I was last winter. I have still some kind of trouble in the side, but I have got used to it, and it does not have such an intolerably depressing effect on my spirits as it did six months ago, when I was really half crazy. It was not my own fault, for I did everything I could and resisted to the utmost, but, for all that, I look back upon last winter as the most wretched of my life except one. So if my irritability cropped out in my letters at all, pray forgive it. I am all right now, and as sensible as a selectman. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Paris, July 12, 1856.

. . . You do not speak of Titian's "Assumption" among your pictures. Don't you admire it? If you don't, you have not seen it. I did not till the last time I was there. I think it the most splendid piece of color in the world. And who ever saw such clouds on canvas? Clouds that are not pretty like Correggio's, nor puff-balls like Raphael's, but the very vapor of morning Hippocrene conjured up by Apollo to make rainbows in for Phaëton when he was a baby, or for some goddess to hide in—water and light and air in musical proportion, and glowing as if the goddess were already hidden in it. The little angels, too! was there ever anything so lovely? Such endless variety in the attitudes, not one sprawling or awkward or making you feel uncomfortable for fear it should fall, but all floating as if it were as much their nature to float as bubbles. They mingle so charmingly with the cloud that you can fancy that if you wait you will see the whole of it transmuted into such heavenly butterflies by the touch of the Virgin's feet. Do you remember Domenichino's cherubs in the "Communion of St. Jerome"? They look as if they had been tossed up there by a mad bull, and you pity the poor little red dears, who have evidently just been whipped by their unnatural mothers, and who (to judge by their expression) are expecting another whipping when they tumble (as they instantly must) for having been naughty enough to be tossed at all. The painters find it commonly very hard to bring up these angelic children of theirs prop-

erly, and they look mostly like *chérubins terribles* whom one wishes out of the way; but those of Titian are altogether delightful—little Cupids who have been baptized into the Church without losing a bit of their animal spirits, and who would contrive to get bows and arrows to make mischief with if ever they got into a nunnery. And those two hundred pounds of solid Venetian woman—how irresistibly they go up! No danger of *her* slumping through the clouds to dislocate the neck of some poor apostle below, a consummation which one is apt to expect in compositions of the kind. Then the wonderful atmosphere—but *basta!* Did you learn to love John Bellini? and Cima da Conegliano? And did you see the beautiful throned Madonna, with saints and angiolini below, by—I can't recall his name, but it hangs to the left of the "Presentation"? . . .

IV

1856–1865

RETURN FROM EUROPE. — ENTERS UPON THE DUTIES OF HIS PROFESSORSHIP.—MARRIAGE TO MISS DUNLAP.—EDITORSHIP OF THE *ATLANTIC MONTHLY*.—NEW SERIES OF "THE BIGLOW PAPERS."—JOINT EDITORSHIP OF THE *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*.—THE "COMMEMORATION ODE."

LETTERS TO H. W. LONGFELLOW, MISS NORTON, C. E. NORTON, C. F. BRIGGS, S. H. GAY, W. J. STILLMAN, T. W. HIGGINSON, O. W. HOLMES, THOMAS HUGHES, NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE, J. L. MOTLEY, W. D. HOWELLS, CHARLES NORDHOFF, J. T. FIELDS, MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW.

In the summer of 1856 Lowell returned from Europe, and in the autumn entered upon his regular duties as professor. Admirably accomplished as he was for their performance, and fitted, by sympathy with youthful students no less than by natural gifts and acquired learning, for the post of teacher, he nevertheless found its exactions irksome, and the demand which it made upon him such as to interfere more or less with the free exercise of his poetic faculty. His lectures during the twenty years which he held the professorship had a wide range through the fields of Modern Literature, and were such as college students have rarely had the good-fortune to hear.

In the summer of 1857 the happiness of his life was renewed by his marriage to Miss Frances Dunlap. She

was a woman of remarkable gifts and graces of person and character, and from this time, for many years, their domestic life was of exceptional felicity.

In the autumn of the same year he undertook the editorship of the *Atlantic Monthly*, a new venture, which under his guidance speedily took the leading place among American literary periodicals. He held the position of editor for nearly four years, devoting much time to its duties. Shortly after resigning its editorship into the competent hands of Mr. James T. Fields he became joint editor with me of the *North American Review*, which, mainly through his contributions to its pages, regained its old distinction as an organ of the best contemporary thought in America.

During the years of the Rebellion his writings were among the most powerful and effective expressions of the sentiment and opinions of the North. Once more Hosea Biglow uttered the voice of the people; and at the end of the war the "Commemoration Ode" gave expression in its nobly inspired strophes to the true heart of the nation. Few poets have ever rendered such service to their country as Lowell rendered in these years.

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Cambridge, Aug. 16, 1856.

My dear Philoctetes,—I was not, I confess, half so sorry for your accident as I ought to have been, because it will give you to me as a neighbor for some time longer.*

* Longfellow had been prevented by a lameness from an intended voyage to Europe.

I should have come down* to see you whether you had asked me or not, but it was particularly pleasant to find your welcome awaiting me here. I shall come Monday if possible.

I am enjoying the academic delights from which you too early withdrew yourself—being pursued by the entire Teutonic, Swiss, Hungarian, Polish, and other emigrations, who are all desirous (especially the last three) to teach the German tongue at Cambridge. I have done nothing since my return but read certificates in various unknown tongues and stand at bay, protecting myself with a cheval-de-frise of English. However, the choice is made to-day, and then I shall be quit of them—unless the rejected take to reviewing my poems.

I saw a great deal of Appleton† in England, who was in uncommonly good health and spirits, and as full of good talk as ever. I bring a little package from him.

How shall I address you? Do you submit still to the "Professor," or do you find a fresher flavor in "Esquire"? I shall follow old use and wont, and call you as ever.

Give my most cordial regards to Mrs. Longfellow, and believe me ever

Affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.‡

* To Nahant, on the sea-shore, where Longfellow was spending the summer.

† Longfellow's brother-in-law, whom his narrowing circle of friends recall affectionately as Tom Appleton—a man with the temperament of genius, and all its social and many of its poetic gifts.

‡ Longfellow wrote in his diary: "18 August. Lowell came down and passed the day, looking as if he had not been gone a week. It is very pleasant to have him back again."

TO MISS NORTON

Cambridge, Sept. 9, 1856,
Mabel's Birthday.

. . . You see that I no longer date my letters "Elmwood," but simple "Cambridge." After thirty-seven years spent in the ship-house, only hearing afar the tumults of the sea, I am launched at last, and have come to anchor in Professors' *Row*.* Or am I rather a tree with my tap-root cut? Or a moss-gathering bowlder gripped up by that cold iceberg Necessity, and dropped here at the corner of Oxford Street? We never find out on how many insignificant points we have fastened the subtile threads of association—which is almost love with sanguine temperaments—till we are forced to break them; and perhaps, as we grow older, Fancy is more frugal of her web: spins it more for catching flies than from an overplus that justifies whim and wastefulness. . . .

. . . I will envy you a little your delightful two months in England—and a picture rises before me of long slopes washed with a cool lustre of watery sunshine—a swan-silenced reach of sallow-fringed river—great humps of foliage contrasting taper spires—cathedral closes, gray Gothic fronts elbowed by red-brick deaneries—broad downs clouded with cumulous sheep—nay, even a misty, moisty morning in London, and the boy with the pots of porter, and the hansom cab just losing itself in the universal gray—even these sights I envy you. . . .

* On his return from Europe Lowell went to reside with his brother-in-law, Dr. Estes Howe, on Kirkland Street, known in the good old times as "Professors' Row."

I suppose you think you are having all the green to yourselves over there—but there never was a greater mistake. The fates have given us an exceptional August —so unlike the common ones that I don't believe even the oysters found out what *r*-less month it was—rain every other day, so that trees and grass are like June, while at the same time we have the ripeness of the middle-aged year instead of the girlishness of a season in its teens. . . . The hills that you see beyond Charles as you go towards Boston are superb, and then we have all the while those glorious skies of ours, with the clouds heaped up like white foam-bursts to set them off in full perfection. And the sunsets! Europe has lost the art of shining skies as of staining glass—or is it that our unthrift New World squanders like a young heir just come into his estate, while grandam Europe is growing close-fisted? Is our Nature Venetian with her gorgeous color, or only Indian, painting herself savagely with the fiercest pigments? I am delighted with your *ma*triotism. "Rome, Venice, Cambridge!" I take it for an ascending scale, Rome being the first step and Cambridge the glowing apex. But you wouldn't know Cambridge —with its railroad and its water-works and its new houses. You remember our bit of Constantinopolitanism—the burnt-out shell of the school-house on the Common? It is gone, and a double house stares like an opera-glass in its place. Think of a car passing our corner at Elmwood every fifteen minutes! Think of the most extraordinary little "Accommodation"—an omnibus that holds four, with an Irish driver whose pride in it is in the inverse ratio of its size—to carry one to

the cars! Think of a reservoir behind Mr. Wells's! And then think of Royal Morse and John Holmes and me in the midst of these phenomena! I seem to see our dear old village wriggling itself out of its chrysalis and balancing its green wings till the sun gives them color and firmness. Soon it will go fluttering with the rest over the painted garden of this fool's paradise, trying to suck honey from flowers of French crape. For my part, I stick where I was, and don't believe in anything new except butter.

To-morrow (for there is a gap of a week in this letter) we are to inaugurate Greenough's Franklin with a tremendous procession—which I look at solely from a Mabelian point of view. Did I say solely? Well, let it stand. But I may just mention that the American Academy comes in before the governor, and Charles perhaps can tell you who *some* of the fellows are. *It is thought* that they will find carriages provided for them. That under these circumstances I should find composure to write to you is a curious biological (I believe that's the word now) fact. There are to be two addresses and an oration. Only think how interesting! and we shall find out that Franklin was born in Boston, and invented being struck with lightning and printing and the Franklin medal, and that he had to move to Philadelphia because great men were so plenty in Boston that he had no chance, and that he revenged himself on his native town by saddling it with the Franklin stove, and that he discovered the almanac, and that a penny saved is a penny lost, or something of the kind. So we put him up a statue. *I* mean to invent something—in order to

encourage sculptors. How to make butter from cocoanut milk, for example—or, by grafting the cocoanut with the breadfruit-tree, to make this last bear buttered muffins. Or, still better, if I could show folks how to find the penny they are to save. That has always been my difficulty. Or would it be enough to do as the modern poets, who invent the new by exaggerating the old, and be original by saying a *dollar* saved is a *dollar* lost—or we shall never feather our nests from the eagles we have let fly? . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, Sept. 16, 1856.

. . . I have just come in from a walk up the little lane that runs down behind the hill to Fresh Pond. It is one of the few spots left *something* like what it was when I was a boy, and I can pick hazelnuts from the same bushes which brought me and the chipmunks together thirty years ago. I really think it is bad for our moral nature here in America that so many of the links that bind us to our past are severed in one way or another, and am grateful for anything that renews in me that capacity for mere delight which made my childhood the richest part of my life. It seems to me as if I had never seen nature again since those old days when the balancing of a yellow butterfly over a thistlebroom was spiritual food and lodging for a whole forenoon. This morning I have had it all over again. There were the same high-heaped shagbark-trees—the same rosebushes with their autumn corals on—the same curving goldenrods and wide-eyed asters — the same heavy-headed

goatsbeard—the same frank blue sky—the same cloud-shadows I used to race with—the same purple on the western hills—and, as I walked along, the great-grandchildren of the same metallic devil's-darning-needles slid sideways from the path and were back again as soon as I had passed. Nature has not budged an inch in all these years, and meanwhile over how many thistles have I hovered and thought I was—no matter what; it is splendid, as girls say, to dream backward so. One feels as if he were a poet, and one's own Odyssey sings itself in one's blood as he walks. I do not know why I write this to you so far away, except that as this world goes it is something to be able to say, "I have been happy for two hours." I wanted to tell you, too, what glorious fall weather we are having, clear and champagney, the northwest wind crisping Fresh Pond to steel-blue, and curling the wet lily-pads over till they bloom in a sudden flash of golden sunshine. How I do love the earth! I feel it thrill under my feet. I feel somehow as if it were conscious of my love, as if something passed into my dancing blood from it, and I get rid of that dreadful duty-feeling—"what right have I to be?"—and not a golden-rod of them all soaks in the sunshine or feels the blue currents of the air eddy about him more thoughtlessly than I.

I wish I could reach you a cup of this wine over those briny leagues. I drink your health in it, and then the glass shatters as usual. . . .

. . . You ask about me. I have not begun to lecture yet, but am to deliver my old Lowell Institute Course first and then some on German Literature and Dante. . . .

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Cambridge, Sept. 18, 1856.

My dear Friend,—No greeting could go to my heart straighter than yours, and yet I have let all these days slip by without returning it—not a day, though, without thinking of you and *meaning* to write.

I am back again and not back again—that is, I am in Cambridge, but not at Elmwood. . . . I am at Dr. Howe's. . . . Cambridge is looking her best—the autumn rains keep us green as England.

About Page. He is grown older in face and hair (or want of it, rather), but is the same beautiful enthusiast. Just now it is Swedenborg whom he insists on decanting for you all the time. Naturally I wanted to see Page and not Swedenborg, so it was rather a bore, because I could not get *en rapport* with him. He has painted a Venus which all the galleries in Europe would contend for if it were by Titian—but why a Venus? It is his everlasting luck or destiny or whatever it may be —his want of *taste* I think we must call it. That seems to me his weak point. . . .

He is painting better than ever, but the artists say that he uses too much boiled oil, and that his pictures *must* grow black. Some I have already seen which had reached a mulatto stage, and were on their way to perfect Uncle Toms, which, considering the prejudice of color, is a pity. He will prove to you that it can't be so, but his pictures never get so good a light as from the effulgence of his personal presence. However, I hope the Venus will stand, and if she does, his monument is

built beyond all time and chance. If he only had more taste! It is enough for his friends that *he is* great. It is enough for him if he paint a thing just as he sees it—never mind how ungraceful or unpoetical. . . .

We are going to elect Fremont, aren't we? It will be the best thing that has happened in my time. We shall begin to be a nation at last, I hope, instead of a clique, as hitherto—and a clique of gamblers, too. The country seems like a great *rouge-et-noir* table, of which the President is temporary banker. . . .

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Cambridge, Dec. 21, 1859.

My dear Sydney,—Your having edited a pirated edition of the "Biglow Papers" puts me in mind of what happened once to a classmate of mine. He owned a row of houses occupied by factory-operatives. In some election imbroglio or other the said tenants had voted against their landlord, whereupon some Irish friends of his went and smashed in all their windows (a sort of Irish bull in a china-shop), and he was obliged to reset them next day. But never mind, I sha'n't lose much by it, and even if I should, I should be willing to pay something for the amusement of seeing on the title-page that the book had been "alluded to by Mr. Bright in Parliament." Only think of it! it quite takes my breath away. But better yet, what foretaste of immortality like being edited with philological notes? It makes me feel as if the grass were growing over me. . . .

. . . I am much obliged to you for wishing to see my verses oftener. One needs *time* and quiet to write good

verses—I have neither. Remember Wordsworth's definition of poetry—"violent emotion re-collected in tranquillity." However, let me ask you to read "Italy, 1859," in December *Atlantic*. My friends here like it. One of these days I mean to print another volume—perhaps two—one of verse and one of prose. But who knows? At present I am perfectly Grubstreet, but then I have the pleasure of earning every penny I spend, and that is next best to having a competence, which Billy Lee defined to be "a million a minute, and your expenses paid"—the only satisfactory definition I ever saw.

Why did you not let me see you when you were here? It would have been a great pleasure to me. I don't readily forget old friends, nor easily stop loving anybody I have ever loved. However, I have learned long ago not to expect more than three people to care for me at a time—maybe I'm extravagant in saying three.

Good-by.

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, Jan. 30, 1857.

...I am very glad to hear that you are translating the "Vita Nuova." It is the best possible introduction to a transcendental understanding of the "Commedia." What an extraordinary threefold nature that was of Dante's! The more you study him the more sides you find, and yet the ray from him is always white light. I learn continually to prize him more as man, poet, artist, moralist, and teacher. Without him there were no Italy. And the Italian commentators forever twitching at his sleeve

and trying to make him say he is of their way of thinking! Of *their* way, indeed! One would think he might be free of them, at least, in Paradise. He becomes daily more clear and more mysterious to me. What a web a man can spin out of his life if a man be only a genius! Do you remember the fairy-tale of the princess shut up in the room full of straw by the cruel step-mother? She must spin it and weave it into cloth of gold before morning, and because she *is* the true princess it turns to ductile gold under her fingers, while it remains despairing straw to all the rest. Well, I suppose the true prince is he who has a good purpose and never falters from it. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Brevoort House (New York), Feb. 9, 1857.

. . . After all, I got here too late for my first lecture, which *they* thought was to be on Tuesday and *I* thought was to be on Thursday—a difference of opinion which resulted in an audience and no lecturer. I am to try again next Thursday. . . .

I said something about this city being like Paris—or rather *not* like it. I have got the phrase I wanted now—it is *plaster* of Paris—a bad cast of a Bernini original. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON (in Italy)

Cambridge, March 21, 1857.

. . . Of course you have heard of the Dred Scott decision. I think it will do good. It makes Slavery, as far as the Supreme Court can, national—so now the lists are open, and we shall soon find where the tougher lance-

shafts are grown—North or South. Don't fail to read Justice Curtis's opinion * if you see it; it does him great honor, and will rank hereafter among the classics of jurisprudence. . . .

TO W. J. STILLMAN

Kirkland St., Cambridge, May 14, 1857.

My dear Stillman,—Of course I wish you to come, only not yet—not till I have done with my lectures and can *see you*—not till the leaves are on the oaks and you can see *them*.

I am glad you do not forget me, though I seem so memoryless and ungrateful. I shall be better one of these days, I hope. While my lectures are on my mind I am not myself, and I seem to see all the poetry drying out of me. I droop on my rocks and hear the surge of the living waters, but they will not reach me till some extraordinary high spring tide—and may be not then. . . .

The apple-trees are in blossom, but I have hardly had time to see them. Horse-chestnuts are in leaf, and linnets and robins sing. But there are not so many birds here as at Elmwood—not so many anywhere as there used to be, and I think the cares of life weigh on them so that they can't sing. We have had only a day or two of warm weather yet. Spring seems like an ill-arranged scene at the theatre that hitches and won't slide forward, and we see winter through the gaps. Bring May with you when you come—remember that. . . .

* In the Dred Scott case.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Oct. 28, 1857.

My dear Stillman,—Thank you for your letters—especially that from among the dear old Adirondacks. Though written in pencil, it did my heart more good than my eyes harm—only it made me homesick to be back again,

"A-chasing the wild-deer and following the *row*."

Your last I ought to have answered a week ago, but when I stop payment of letters I do it altogether and, like a man of honor, allow no favored creditors.

I should like the article very much. Make it about six or seven pages (print), and at the same time be as lively and as solid as you can. You may have full swing. This is like ordering so many pints of inspiration, eh?—as if Castaly were bottled up like Congress-water and sent all over the country for sale! Well, never mind, but make it as good as you can. Instructive articles should be sweetened as much as possible, for people don't naturally like to learn anything, and prefer taking their information as much as they can in disguise.

Why did you not write me the enthusiastic letter you say that you suppressed? I should have been delighted with it. For God's sake, don't let your enthusiasm go! It is your good genius. When we have once lost it, we would give all the barren rest of our lives to get back but a day of it. Your letter would have hit the white, too, for I am as happy as I can be and thank God continually. I have known and honored my wife for years

—but I find some new good in her daily. So you may be as warm as you like in your congratulations.

Did you accomplish much among the lakes? I long to see some results.

God bless you!

Affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Dec. 30, 1857.

. . . I think you are a little hard on Ruskin—and it seems to me that he *is* a good logician, but bad *reasoner*. Give him his premises and he is all right. Now, in Æsthetics every man more or less assumes his premises and must do so—don't you see? . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, Dec. 31, 1857.

My dear Charles,—At last! Like a true lazzarone as I am I have been waiting for sunshine before I wrote—I mean, for one of those moods that would make a letter worth sending; and such a mood is not dependent on mere cheerfulness, but almost altogether on having nothing to do, so that one can have time to hatch one's thoughts fairly out as one goes along. Pen and paper are never inspiring to me as conversation sometimes is, —and I was born to sit on a fence in the sun, and (if I had my own way) in those latter days of May, when the uneasy blue-bird shifts his freight of song from post to post, and the new green of spring is just passing from the miraculous into the familiar. . . .

For a lazy man I have a great deal to do. A maga-

zine allows no vacations. What with manuscripts and proofs and what not, it either takes up or breaks up all one's time. . . .

But even the magazine has its compensations. First, it has almost got me out of debt, and next, it compels me into morning walks to the printing-office. There is a little foot-path which leads along the river-bank, and it is lovely; whether in clear, cold mornings, when the fine filaments of the bare trees on the horizon seem floating up like sea-masses in the ether sea, or when (as yesterday) a gray mist fills our Cambridge cup and gives a doubtful loom to its snowy brim of hills, while the silent gulls wheel over the rustling cakes of ice which the Charles is whirling seaward. So I get my bits of country and can feel like a rustic still, but I miss the winter-birds I used to see at home. I continue to think the marshes lovely, and this winter they are covered with plump ricks, whereof some half-dozen standing on my own amphibious territory give me a feeling of ownership and dignity, albeit the hay does not belong to me. This only strengthens a faith I have long held, that we are only metaphysically and imaginatively rich as far as mere possession goes, and only actually so in what we give away. . . .

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, June 13, 1858.

. . . About Rossetti I have not yet made up my mind. There is infinite suggestion in his poem, as there is in a cloud whose meaning changes under your eye and eludes you forever, leaving a feeling that something beautiful has been meant. My notion of a true lyric is

that the meaning should float steadfast in the centre of every stanza, while the vapory emotions (protean in form as you will) float up to it and over it, and wreathe it with an opal halo which seems their own, but is truly its own work. The shades of emotion over, there floats the meaning, clear and sole and sharp-cut in its own luminous integrity. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Cambridge, Aug. 30, 1858.

. . . Since I got your Berkshire letter I have come into an inheritance—I have had my life insured for forty years —I have been chained by one leg—I have suffered the torture of the Boot—I have said disrespectful things of my great-grandfather—I have received no sympathy, but have been laughed at—I have laughed myself, sometimes on the wrong side of my mouth—in short, I have had an attack of the—no, I won't tell you what yet. I will prepare your mind. I will dignify it by poetic precedent. I may compare myself with Milton (in this respect). I may claim brotherhood with Gray and Walpole. In short, I have had the *gout*. I cannot escape the conclusion that I am a middle-aged man. I even fear that I shall have to wear a special shoe on my left foot. My verses will no longer be admired by young ladies of sixteen. On the other hand, I have been thinking over the advantages. I find by the books that (if nothing happens) I shall live long. That it "relieves the system"—which seems to be true, for I have not been so well for a year. That in the course of time I shall be able to write my name and keep my milk-score

with my knuckles. That I shall always have an excuse for being as testy as I please. On the whole, I think the odds are in favor of podagra. The worst danger is that the eyes are liable to be painfully affected with *iritis*—a comprehensive Greek term implying that the eye-wrong-is. But this is more than set off by the certainty that I shall never be subject to that *in-great-toe otio* to which Nereus, according to Horace, doomed the winds. (Since making these two puns I have carefully fumigated the paper, so that you need not fear infection.) As soon as my father heard of my trouble he came to see me, bringing a cyclopædia of medicine (from which he has selected a variety of choice complaints for himself), that my reading might be of an enlivening character. I do not find that there is any specific for the gout, but, on the *similia-similibus* principle, I eat "tomarters" daily. The disease derives its name (like *mons a non movendo*) from the patient's inability to *go out*. The ordinary derivation from *gutta* is absurd—for not only is the German form *Gicht* deduced from *gehen*, but the persons incident to the malady are precisely those who themselves (or their ancestors for them) have kept just this side of the gutter. I never heard that my great-grandfather died insolvent, but I am obliged to *foot* some of his bills for port. I can't help thinking that I shall be worse if I indulge any longer in this kind of thing—so I shall stop. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, Aug. 31, 1858.

. . . I have a notion that the inmates of a house

should never be changed. When the first occupants go out it should be burned, and a stone set up with "*sacred to the memory of a* HOME" on it. Suppose the body were eternal, and that when one spirit went out another took the lease. How frightful the strange expression of the eyes would be! I fancy sometimes that the look in the eyes of a familiar house changes when aliens have come into it. For certainly a dwelling adapts itself to its occupants. The front-door of a hospitable man opens easily and looks broad, and you can read Welcome! on every step that leads to it.

I stopped there and tried to put that into verse. I have only half succeeded, and I shall not give it to you. I shall copy it and thrust it into Jane's letter *—which is otherwise sillybub that deserves to be whipped.

I meant to talk to you about Buckle's book. I have employed all the spare time of my gouty week in reading it through. Six hundred and seventy-two pages octavo! And only the beginning of the Introduction after all! Have you read it? If not, do. As Ellery Channing said of the Bible, "It is a book worthy to read." I don't think one can like it much or dislike it much, but one can learn something. It is a book of vast assumptions—as where he dismisses the whole question of the influence of Race in two lines or so, with the dictum that there is no such thing as hereditary propensities. Of course that's nonsense; but it has been useful to me to read a book written from a totally different point of view, for I was becoming quite a German in respect

* Printed in Lowell's Poems under the title of "The Dead House."

of Race, and inclined to settle all questions by that easy formula, which is also as tempting as it is easy. I think Buckle's book is going to exercise a vast influence on thought in this country, where we have a hundred hasty generalizers for one steady thinker. But if it do not lead to a stupid fatalism and a demand-and-supply doctrine for everything, it will do good. And I think that, properly understood and qualified, it would lead to no such results. It seems to me that the bane of our country is a profession of faith either with no basis of real belief, or with no proper examination of the grounds on which the creed is supposed to rest, and what I like about Buckle's book especially is that there is no *Buncombe* in it—that his conclusions, whether right or wrong (and many of them seem to me to be wrong and even dangerous), are set forth fearlessly and without passion. Perhaps the reason why I like the book is that I disagree with it so much as I do. At any rate, it is a book to be read, for it will certainly influence opinion. . . .

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, Oct. 11, 1858.

. . . My work for the last fortnight *mi ha fatto magro* in good earnest—the work and the worry of it. Phillips was so persuaded of the stand given to the *Magazine* by the Choate article that he has been at me ever since for another. So I have been writing a still longer one on Cushing. I think you will like it—though, on looking over the Choate article this morning, I am inclined to think that on the whole the better of the two. Better as a whole, I mean, for there are passages in this beyond

any in that, I think. These personal things are not such as I should choose to do, for they subject me to all manner of vituperation; but one must take what immediate texts the newspapers afford him, and I accepted the responsibility in accepting my post. I am resolved that no motives of my own comfort or advantage shall influence me, but I hate the turmoil of such affairs, despise the notoriety they give one, and long for the day when I can be vacant to the muses and to my books for their own sakes. I cannot stand the worry of it much longer without a lieutenant. To have questions of style, grammar, and punctuation in other people's articles to decide, while I want all my concentration for what I am writing myself—to have added to this personal appeals, from ill-mannered correspondents whose articles have been declined, to attend to—to sit at work sometimes fifteen hours a day, as I have done lately—makes me nervous, takes away my pluck, compels my neglecting my friends, and induces the old fits of the blues. However, the worst is that it leads me to bore my friends when I *do* get at them. To be an editor is almost as bad as being President. So just take it for granted that I am hipped. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Cambridge, Oct. 23, 1858.

. . . As for reputation, it is only a stage-crown at best, but it is more comfortable than the real one. Fame is really lovely and worth striving for—since it comes after death and others will enjoy it. I don't think I care much for reputation; but nobody knows

till he has tried it, and I have never been sorely tempted that way. I should like to feel that my friends liked what I wrote and found some good in it—yes, more than that, I should like to have Mabel proud of being my daughter after I am gone. That would not need much, though; it is so easy to be proud. I can remember when it would have pleased me to have been illustrated even in *Harper's Weekly*. Now it has happened to me, and I found myself criticising the drawings as if they had no reference to anything of my own—an advance in wisdom, perhaps—but in happiness? I guess not. If I had studied less than I have I should value reputation more, but I know so well how much has been done excellently, and how an excellent thing ought to be done, that I do not value anything I do too highly, and in the end nobody's praise is good for anything but one's own. . . .

TO T. W. HIGGINSON

Cambridge, Dec. 9, 1858.

My dear Higginson,—I like your article * so much that it is already in press as leader of next number. You misunderstood me. I want no change except the insertion of a qualifying "perhaps" where you speak of the natural equality of the sexes, and that as much on your own account as mine—because I think it not yet *demonstrated*. Even in this, if you prefer it, have your own way.

I only look upon my duty as a vicarious one for

* "Ought Women to Learn the Alphabet?"

Phillips & Samson, that nothing may go in (before we are firm on our feet) that helps the "religious" press in their warfare on us. Presently we shall be even with them, and have a *free* magazine in its true sense. I never allow any personal notion of mine to interfere, except in cases of obvious obscurity, bad taste, or bad grammar.

As for your own contributions, I may say to you as I always have to Mr. Underwood, that they are just to my liking — scholarly, picturesque, and, above all, earnest — I think the most *telling* essays we have printed.

I have had occasion to think gratefully of you within a few days in reading the little volume of Chapman you gave me, and which has been of great value to me in enabling me to *settle* a point in which I take issue with Mr. [Grant] White. You will have proofs in a day or so. *Vale.* In the midst of devils of the press, hurriedly and heartily yours,

J. R. L.

TO O. W. HOLMES

Cambridge, Dec. 19, 1858.

My dear Wendell,—Thank you ever so much for the "Autocrat," who comes at last drest like a gentleman. The color of the paper is just that which knowers love to see in old lace.

"Run out" indeed!—who has been suggesting the danger of that to you? I hope you will continue to run out in the style of the first "Professor." The comparison of the bung and the straw is excellent and touched

a very tender spot in me, who was born between two cider-mills, and drew in much childish belly-ache from both, turned now by memory into something like the result that might follow nectar.

You have been holding-in all this while—*possumus omnes*, we all play the 'possum—and are now getting your second wind. I like the new Professor better than the old Autocrat. You have filled no ten pages so wholly to my liking as in the January number. I have just read it and am delighted with it. The "Old Boston" is an inspiration. You have never been so wise and witty as in this last number. I hold up my left foot in token of my unanimity.

The religious press (a true sour-cider press with belly-ache privileges attached) will be at you, but after smashing one of them you will be able to furnish yourself with a Samson's weapon for the rest of the Philisterei. Good-by.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, 2d day of Holy Week,
May, 1859.

. . . I miss you *like thunder*—ça va sans dire—especially in this George-Herbert's-Sunday kind of weather, which is cool and calm and bright as can be thought. I fancy you listening to the bobolinks among the lush grass on the lawn. I heard them yesterday on my way to the printing-office for the first time this spring. That liquid tinkle of theirs is the true fountain of youth if one can

only drink it with the right ears, and I always date the New Year from the day of my first draught. Messer Roberto di Lincoln, with his summer alb over his shoulders, is the true chorister for the bridals of earth and sky. There is no bird that seems to me so thoroughly happy as he, so void of all *arrière pensée* about getting a livelihood. The robin sings matins and vespers somewhat conscientiously, it seems to me—makes a business of it and pipes as it were by the yard—but Bob squanders song like a poet, has no rain-song (as the robin has, who prophesies the coming wet that will tempt the worms out—with an eye to grub), and seems to have no other tune than, *mihi est propositum in tabernâ mori*, with a long unpaid score chalked up against him behind the door. He never forebodes or remembers anything, won't sing in wet weather, but takes a thoughtless delight in present sunshine. I am sure he leaves debts behind him when he comes up from Carolina in May. Well, you see I was happy yesterday on my way to Riverside. I indulged in my favorite pastime of sitting on a fence in the sunshine and basking. The landscape was perfect. . . . Sweet Auburn pink with new-leaved oaks, Corey's Hill green in the hay-fields and brown with squares of freshly turned furrows (*versus*, the farmer's poem), the orchards rosy with apple-blooms, the flowering grasses just darkening the meadows to set off the gold of the buttercups, here and there pale splashes of Houstonia dropt from the Galaxy, and the river all blue and gold. This is Cambridge, sir! What is Newport to this? But I am bobolinking instead of attending to business. . . .

TO THE SAME

Cambridge, June 24, 1859.

. . . Since I wrote, I have been down the harbor with the pilots in the *Friend*. We went first to Hull and telegraphed the boat, which was cruising on the inner station. They could not come in for us at once, because they were on the lookout for the English steamer, so we had a chance to investigate Hull a little. It is a pretty little village cuddled down among hills, the clay soil of which keeps them densely green. The fields are broad and wholly given to grazing of cattle and sheep, which dotted them thickly in the breezy sunshine. Down in the village we found a fine stalwart fellow in a barn shearing sheep. This was something new to me, and, going away, I thanked the man for having shown me something I had never seen before. He laughed and said, "If you'll take off them gloves o' yourn, I'll give you a try at the practical part of it!" By Jove! he was right. I never saw anything handsomer than those strong brown hands of his, on which the sinews were as tight as a drawn bow-string. I caught myself moralizing as usual, and the upshot was, How much more admirable is this tawny vigor—the fruit of downright toil —than the crop of early muscle that heads out under the glass of the gymnasium. I believe I really love rough human nature. I felt that there was nothing uncivil in his gibe at my kids—only a kind of jolly superiority; but I did not like to be taken for a city gent, so I told him that I was bred in the country as well as he. He laughed again and said, "Wall, anyhow I've the advantage of you, for you never see a sheep shore, and

I've bin to the opera and shore a sheep myself into the bargain." He told me that there were two hundred sheep in Hull, and that in his father's day there used to be eight hundred. The father, an old man of near eighty, stood looking on, pleased with his son's wit, as brown as if the Hull fogs were walnut-juice. Then we dined at a little inn with a golden ball hung out for sign—a waif, I fancy, from some shipwrecked vessel. The landlady was Mrs. Vining, a very amusing little personage, who brought her little girl to me, as I sat on the veranda after dinner smoking my pipe, and made her repeat utterly unintelligible verses. She informed me that her husband was "in business in the city," and that he was own cousin to Senator Sumner, their mothers having been sisters, "from Scitooit." A very elaborate sampler in the parlor—representing an obelisk on an island, with an expensive willow of silver thread overhanging it—recorded the virtues of Sumner's maternal grandfather and grandmother.

June 29.

So far I had written on the 24th when something interrupted me. I can't get hold of my thread again. But I met at Mrs. Vining's a tall California Yankee, who told me he "shouldn't mind Panáhmy's bein' sunk, ollers purvidin' they warn't none of *our* folks onto it when it went down!" "Panáhmy" is Panama. Well, we went aboard the pilot-boat and cruised for vessels with a fine breeze. It came up to my notion of pleasure to be down the harbor with something to do and somebody else to do it for you. The next day I was up before sunrise, and got into a habit of early rising that lasted

me all that day. We boarded a bark and a brig before breakfast. Then we saw Minot's Ledge lighthouse that is to be, went up to the top of Boston Light, saw the machinery, also had the fog-bell set in motion—were treated, in short, as if we had been Secretaries of the Treasury. Came home at night with a basket full of lobsters, the gift of Captain Dolliver, who is a noble fellow and weighs two hundred and ten pounds — all which he risked last winter to save a man from a wrecked ship. Does it not require more heroism to venture two hundred weight than a paltry one hundred and forty odd?

Thank you for the *Times*. It amuses me very much. First, because it is so preposterously Austrian—which is very well for you and me to keep us balanced—and second, because its editorials are so grandiloquently mouse-like and so luminously obscure. The debates are instructive. They don't seem to go any more to first principles in England than here—though their speeches are in better English. Mr. Bright shows a commendable familiarity with the *Models of Elegant Composition*—for what he quotes is from a note. But I fear he thinks me too much of a Quaker. In my "Poems" there are some verses on "Freedom," written in '48 or '49—I think '49. They ended thus as originally written. I left the verses out only because I did not think them good—not because I did not like the sentiment. I have strength of mind enough not to change a word—though I see how much better I might make it.

"Therefore of Europe now I will not doubt,
For the broad foreheads surely win the day,
And brains, not crowns or soul-gelt armies, weigh
In Fortune's scales: such dust she brushes out.

Most gracious are the conquests of the Word,
Gradual and silent as a flower's increase,
And the best guide from old to new is Peace—
Yet, Freedom, thou canst sanctify the sword!

"Bravely to do whate'er the time demands,
Whether with pen or sword, and not to flinch,
This is the task that fits heroic hands;
So are Truth's boundaries widened inch by inch.
I do not love the Peace which tyrants make;
The calm she breeds let the sword's lightning break!
It is the tyrants who have beaten out
Ploughshares and pruning-hooks to spears and swords,
And shall I pause and moralize and doubt?
Whose veins run water let him mete his words!
Each fetter sundered is the whole world's gain!
And rather than humanity remain
A pearl beneath the feet of Austrian swine,
Welcome to me whatever breaks a chain.
That surely is of God, and all divine!"

I think it must have been written in 1848, for I remember that, as I first composed it, it had "fair Italy" instead of "Humanity." . . .

Farewell.

Always your loving

J. R. L.

TO MISS NORTON

Cambridge, Saturday.

. . . Yesterday I began my lectures and came off better than I expected, for I am always a great coward beforehand. I *hate* lecturing, for I have discovered (*entre nous*) that it is almost impossible to learn *all* about anything, unless indeed it be some piece of ill-

luck, and then one has the help of one's friends, you know. . . .

TO THOMAS HUGHES

Cambridge, Mass., Sept. 13, 1859.

My dear Sir,—I have put off from time to time writing to you, because I hardly knew what to write. To say simply that I liked your writings would have been pleasant enough (though that would have given me no claim upon you that was not shared by all the world), but I find it particularly hard to write anything about a book of my own. It has been a particular satisfaction to me to hear, now and then, some friendly voice from the old mother-island say "Well done," of the "Biglow Papers," for, to say the truth, I like them myself, and when I was reading them over for a new edition, a year or two ago, could not help laughing. But then as I laughed I found myself asking, "Are these yours? How did you make them?" Friendly people say to me sometimes, "Write us more 'Biglow Papers,'" and I have even been simple enough to try, only to find that I could not. This has helped to persuade me that the book was a genuine growth and not a manufacture, and that, therefore, I had an honest right to be pleased without blushing if people liked it. But, then, this very fact makes it rather hard to write an introduction to it. All I can say is that the book was *thar*—how it came is more than I can tell. I cannot, like the great Goethe, deliberately imagine what would have been a proper *Entstehungsweise* for my book and then assume it as fact. And as for an historical preface, I find that quite as hard after now twelve years of more

cloistered interests and studies that have alienated me very much from contemporary politics. I only know that I believed our war with Mexico (though we had as just ground for it as a strong nation ever has against a weak one) to be essentially a war of false pretences, and that it would result in widening the boundaries and so prolonging the life of slavery. Believing that it is the manifest destiny of the English race to occupy this whole continent and to display there that practical understanding in matters of government and colonization which no other race has given such proof of possessing since the Romans, I hated to see a noble hope evaporated into a lying phrase to sweeten the foul breath of demagogues. Leaving the sin of it to God, I believed and still believe that slavery is the Achilles-heel of our polity; that it is a temporary and false supremacy of the white races, sure to destroy that supremacy at last, because an enslaved people always prove themselves of more enduring fibre than their enslavers, as not suffering from the social vices sure to be engendered by oppression in the governing class. Against these and many other things I thought all honest men should protest. I was born and bred in the country, and the dialect was homely to me. I tried my first "Biglow Paper" in a newspaper, and found that it had a great run. So I wrote the others from time to time during the year which followed, always very rapidly, and sometimes (as with "What Mr. Robinson thinks") at one sitting.

When I came to collect them and publish them in a volume, I conceived my parson-editor with his pedantry and verbosity, his amiable vanity and superiority to the

verses he was editing, as a fitting artistic background and foil. It gave me the chance, too, of glancing obliquely at many things which were beyond the horizon of my other characters. I was told afterwards that my Parson Wilbur was only Jedediah Cleishbotham over again, and I dare say it may be so; but I drew him from the life as well as I could, and for the authentic reasons I have mentioned. I confess that I am proud of the recognition the book has received in England, because it seems to prove that, despite its intense provincialism, there is a general truth to human nature in it which justifies its having been written.

But life is too short to write about one's self in, and you see that I cannot make a suitable preface. I would rather have something of this kind: "It could not but be gratifying to the writer of the 'Biglow Papers' that Mr. Trübner should deem it worth his while to publish an edition of them in England. It gives him a particular pleasure that the author of 'Tom Brown's School Days' should have consented to see the work through the press, for the remarkable favor with which that work was received on both sides of the Atlantic proved that all speakers of the English tongue, however differing in other respects, agree wholly in their admiration for soundness of head and heart and manliness of character."

Now do not think this is "Buncombe."

Just behind me is the portrait of some fine oaks painted for me by an artist friend of mine.* He wanted

* Mr. W. J. Stillman.

a human figure as a standard of size, and so put me in as I lay in the shade reading. So long as the canvas lasts I shall lie there with the book in my hand, and the book is "Tom Brown." A man cannot read a book out of doors that he does not love. Q. E. D.

Allow me, then, to offer you a hearty grip of the hand over the water, and perhaps the fact that my only son lies under the daisies in Rome may justify me in offering to you and Mrs. Hughes my sympathy in your late terrible sorrow. With all good wishes, I remain

Sincerely yours,

J. R. Lowell.

P. S. It occurs to me that you may like the facts of my biography. Born in 1819 at Cambridge, where I have lived ever since, with the exception of two visits to Europe. Read law—never practised. Was chosen in '55 to succeed Ticknor and Longfellow as professor of Modern Literature in Harvard College.

TO T. W. HIGGINSON

Cambridge, Oct. 24, 1859.

My dear Higginson,—You prevent my wishes. I was going to ask you for something. Editorially, I am a little afraid of [John] Brown, and Ticknor * would be more so. But perhaps I misunderstand you. Anyhow, as long as I edit I want you to write.

I don't quite agree with you about the last number. I think "Dog Talk" one of the cleverest articles I have

* Messrs. Ticknor & Fields had now become the publishers of the *Atlantic Monthly*.

printed—just on an easy, gentleman-like level that fitted the topic. It was written, I believe, by an officer in the English army—the same who wrote "The Perilous Bivouac" and "The Walker of the Snow." I liked them all. But heavens! could you look into my drawers! I do the best I can. As to my notice of Bartlett*—it would have been better had I ever kept notes of Yankeeisms. Groping for them in one's memory won't do, and I wrote with the printer's devil waiting in my best easy-chair and reading my newspaper before I had looked at it—perhaps the best Americanism of the lot.

Always truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THOMAS HUGHES

Cambridge, St. Shakespeare's Day, 1860.

My dear Sir,—It is ever so long that I ought to have written to you, but I look upon letters to men I value as in some sort sacred things, and would not (as we do with sacred things in general) fob them off with the fag ends of our time and mind. You have been too busy to know whether I wrote or not, and the only fear I had was that I might seem ungrateful. I think good gratitude a scarcer thing in this world than good verses, and wish in the heartiest way to express mine to you. I cannot help feeling that you were too friendly, but that is a fault one would be a churl to grumble at. I was a little startled to read my name in the list of the great satirists, and don't feel quite sure how they will take it. I hardly dare

* Bartlett's "Dictionary of Americanisms."

hope for that *salutevol cenno* with which the sacred procession of shadowy poets turned towards Dante. But I do take an honest pride and satisfaction in the praise of such as you. It is twenty years since I published my first volume, and during all that time I have dwelt in a sort of limbo—this side of downright damnation, it is true, but almost as far from unqualified success. When I received the copy of the "Biglow Papers," with your introduction, I was deeply touched, and ran to show it to my wife, who was as pleased as I. I am too much gratified to allow it to be "exploited" as an advertisement, and have only allowed my intimate friends even to see it, for I will not have your kindness trailed through the mire of the newspapers.

You are quite right in thinking that I am none of the "peace at any price" men. I believe that Shakespeare has expressed the true philosophy of war in those magnificent verses in "The Two Noble Kinsmen," which are as unlike Beaumont and Fletcher as Michael Angelo's charcoal head on the wall of the Farnesina is unlike Raphael:

> "O great corrector of enormous times,
> Shaker of o'er-rank states, thou grand decider
> Of dusty and old titles, that heal'st with blood
> The earth when she is sick, and curest the world
> O' th' pleurisy of people!"

And if the bold Duval who now rules France (holding it virtue, when he steals a hundred pounds from the rich, if he give sixpence to the poor) should try to filch that "precious gem set in a silver sea," no one will exult more than I when the men whose bones were made in Eng-

land teach him a severer lesson than his uncle learned on sea and land a half-century ago. Though you English (most of you) insist on misunderstanding us Yankees, you must not think that we forget what blood runs in our veins.

I am greatly indebted to you for your kindness to Stillman. Don't be afraid that I am going to overwhelm you with letters of introduction. That is the first I ever gave to any one on your side the water, and I gave that because I thought you would be interested in the bearer. He can tell you all about our woods and hunters, and even among woodsmen is a great shot with the rifle. He is of good Puritan stock, and will interest you as a fair type of what the English race has become over here in two centuries of orphanage.

I am going to ask another kindness of you. A friend of mine* comes to England with commissions to draw some heads for some of us here. He is to draw Kossuth, Carlyle, Owen, Tennyson, and one other (whom I forget). Stillman will tell you that he is a masterly draughtsman. I hope you will consent to give so much of your time and patience as to let him draw you for me. If you do, I will ask you to write your name on the drawing. It will be in my study as long as I live, and then will go to our College here with some other portraits I have. I feel as if I had a right to send my kindest greetings to Mrs. Hughes, though I have never seen her. Stillman has written to me of her friendly attention to him. Let me hope you will do me the favor to

* Mr. S. W. Rowse. The commissions were never executed.

sit for me, and be sure that I am always warmly and faithfully yours,

J. R. Lowell.

Stillman says that Mrs. Hughes likes my verses, so I enclose two pieces she has never seen.

TO MISS NORTON

Cambridge, June 12, 1860.

. . . I have seen Hawthorne twice, and he was gratified, he told me, with my little notice of "The Marble Faun," and thought it came nearer the kernel than any of them. And I was gratified, too. He told me that his characters always had their own way with him; that they were foredoomed from the first, and that he was only their historian. He is writing another story. He said also that it had been part of his plan in "The Scarlet Letter" to make Dimmesdale confess himself to a Catholic priest. I, for one, am sorry he didn't. It would have been psychologically admirable. He looks no older than when I saw him last, eight years ago, wears a moustache, and is easier in society than formerly.

But this is not what I meant to write about. I "took pen in hand" (and a horrible pen, too) meaning to tell you all about ex-President Franklin Pierce. Make a courtesy, if you please. Ticknor & Fields gave a dinner, and ex-P. F. P. was there as a friend of Hawthorne. Anything funnier I never saw, or more out of place. (Stoker* has just come in with his foot bleeding, and

* His dog.

oh, Jer*u*salem! how my head aches!) He is used to public speaking, and so he public-speaks in a *tête-à-tête*, doing the appropriate gestures and all. He placed himself, after a while, by me, told me "how long, sir, he had looked forward, sir," etc. At last, leaning confidentially towards me, he said, "Sir, I glory in your fame! I am proud of every man, sir, who does honor to me country!" I looked him straight in the face with the gravity of a Sphinx to whom a traveller should say, "Sir-Madam, I glory in the perfect unfrivolity of your sienite nature!" As an intimate female friend of mine says, it was *too* funny. I never saw the real Elijah Pogram before. But he seemed a good-natured kind of man, and told me a good story of Hawthorne. When Pierce had been nominated for the Presidency, Hawthorne came to see him, sat down by him on a sofa, and after a melancholy silence, heaving a deep sigh, said, "Frank, *what* a pity!" Then after a pause, "But, after all, this world was not meant to be happy in—only to succeed in!"

I am at my wit's, paper's, and daylight's end, and am, as always,

Your

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Cambridge, July 12, 1860.

My dear Charles,—The pen I write with emblemizes me. I am worn to a stump—I am muddy and cloggy with the work I have had to do—the feather part of me (curtailed at its best estate) has been torn, nibbled, and otherwise rendered as little suggestive of flight as possible—moreover, I am partly a goose. I have been writ-

ing a notice of "Wedgwood's Dictionary!" You know my unfortunate weakness for doing things not quite superficially. So I have been a week about it—press waiting—devil at my elbow (I mean the printer's)—every dictionary and vocabulary I own gradually gathering in a semicircle round my chair—and three of the days of twelve solid hours each. And with what result? At most six pages, which not six men will care anything about. And now it is done I feel as if I had taken hold of the book the wrong way, and that I should have devoted myself to his theory more and to particulars less; or, rather, that I ought to have had more space. But I had a gap to fill up—just so much and no more. There is one passage in it that I wager will make all of you laugh, and heavens! what fun I could have made of the book if I had been unscrupulous! But I soon learned to respect Wedgwood's attainments, and resisted all temptation.

It is an awful thing to write against Time, my dear boy, and Time always is even with us in the end, for he never lets what is written against him last very long or go very far. . . .

. . . The older I grow the less I know—and I am only just beginning to be a student. Had I ever kept notebooks, I might have known something—what people call knowing — in a multitudinous higgledy-piggledy kind of way. But method and arrangement are true knowledge; the other is merely learning—good for little but show. I have only just got the key—not even that, but only an impression of it in wax; and if I don't dig gold enough (for no other metal serves) to cast it

before long, why, the mould loses its sharpness of edges and so . . . ! Ah, if I had twenty years sure ! . . .

TO W. D. HOWELLS

Cambridge, Monday, Aug., 1860.

My dear young Friend,—Here is a note to Mr. Hawthorne, which you can use if you have occasion.

Don't print too much and too soon; don't get married in a hurry; read what will make you *think*, not *dream;* hold yourself dear, and more power to your elbow! God bless you!

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

A man may have ever so much in him, but ever so much depends on how he gets it out.

Finis, quoad Biglow.

TO NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Cambridge, Aug. 5, 1860.

My dear Hawthorne,—I have no masonic claim upon you except community of tobacco, and the young man who brings this does not smoke.

But he wants to look at you, which will do you no harm, and him a great deal of good.

His name is Howells, and he is a fine young fellow, and has written several *poems* in the *Atlantic*, which of course you have never read, because you don't do such things yourself, and are old enough to know better.

When I think how much you might have profited by the perusal of certain verses of somebody who shall be

nameless — but, no matter! If my judgment is good for anything, this youth has more in him than any of our younger fellows in the way of rhyme.

Of course he can't hope to rival the *Consule Planco* men. Therefore let him look at you, and charge it

To yours always,

J. R. Lowell.

TO W. D. HOWELLS

Cambridge, Dec. 1, 1860.

My dear Sir,—I am glad the papers have had taste enough to find out the goodness of "The Pilot's Story."* Goethe tells us to ask the boys and the blackbirds which are the ripest cherries, but the public seems seldom to have much either of boy or blackbird in it, and newspaper editors still seldomer; but I sha'n't think the worse of your poem because they like it, for I liked it myself. More than that, I thought it a really fine poem. Accordingly, I am glad to hear that you are to send us another; glad also that you are making yourself scarce. That is not only wise, but worldly-wise, too. The Sibyl knew what she was about, and I, for one, don't believe that the suppressed verses would have added to the sly jade's reputation.

I couldn't notice the "Poets and Poetry of the West" in the way you would have wished, so I thought it best not to wet my pen. To be perfectly honest, your own was wellnigh the only poetry I found in it, and the amount of rhyme-and-water was prodigious. It goes against my grain to cut up anything, unless there be

* Printed in the *Atlantic Monthly*.

some duty involved or some good to be done by it. I have given the book to the College Library, where it will sleep well with plenty of its peers. It gave me great pleasure to make your acquaintance, and to find you a man of sense as well as genius—a rare thing, especially in one so young. Keep fast hold of the one, for it is the clue that will bring you to the door that will open only to the magic password of the other. I shall not forget Mr. Piatt.

Your poem will be welcome when it arrives.

Very cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO CHARLES NORDHOFF

Cambridge, Dec. 31, 1860.

My dear Sir,—I owe you a great many thanks for your letters, both for their personal kindness towards myself and for the trouble you have taken in sending the Yankeeisms—nearly all of which were new to me, and whose salt-sea flavor has its own peculiar *tang* in it. I have now to thank you also for your pamphlet, so timely and spirited, and which I read with great satisfaction on its own account, and more for the sake of the author.

I do not well know what to make of the present posture of affairs—whether to believe that we have not succeeded in replacing the old feeling of loyalty with the better one of Public Spirit, and whether this failure be due to our federal system—whose excellence as a drag on centralization in the general government is balanced by its evil of disintegration, giving as it does to the citi-

zens of each State separate interests and what the Italians call belfry patriotism; or whether it be due to the utter demoralization of the Democratic party, which has so long been content to barter principle for office; or whether to the want of political training and foresight, owing to our happy-go-lucky style of getting along hitherto. All this puzzles me, I confess. But one thing seems to me clear—that we have been running long enough by dead-reckoning, and that it is time to take the height of the sun of righteousness.

Is it the effect of democracy to make all our public men cowards? An ounce of pluck just now were worth a king's ransom. There is one comfort, though a shabby one, in the feeling that matters will come to such a pass that courage will be forced upon us, and that when there is no hope left we shall learn a little self-confidence from despair. That in such a crisis the fate of the country should be in the hands of a sneak! If the Republicans stand firm we shall be saved, even at the cost of disunion. If they yield, it is all up with us and with the experiment of democracy.

As for new "Biglow Papers," God knows how I should like to write them, if they would only *make* me as they did before. But I am so occupied and bothered that I have no time to *brood*, which with me is as needful a preliminary to hatching anything as with a clucking hen. However, I am going to try my hand, and see what will come of it. But what we want is an hour of Old Hickory, or Old Rough and Ready—some man who would take command and crystallize this chaos into order, as it is all ready to do round the slenderest thread

of honest purpose and unselfish courage in any man who is in the right place. They advise us to be magnanimous, as if giving up what does not belong to us were magnanimity—to be generous, as if there were generosity in giving up a trust reposed in us by Providence. God bless Major Anderson for setting us a good example!

I hear one piece of good news. Our governor, in his speech to the General Court, is going to recommend that the State be instantly put on a war footing—so that, in case there should be need to order out the militia at the call of the general government, they may be ready to march at a moment's notice. If we can only get one or two Free States to show that they are in earnest, it will do a world of good.

If you should see a "Biglow Paper" before long, try to like it for auld lang syne's sake. I must run over to hear my classes, so good-by and a Happy New Year from your

Cordial friend,

J. R. Lowell.

P. S. 1862. I think the letter rather curious than otherwise now—we have got on so.

[The foregoing letter was not sent, as appears from the following note, until more than a year had passed after its writing.

Elmwood, Feb. 17, 1862.

My dear Sir,—Hunting over my desk yesterday for some letters of Clough's, I found the enclosed to you. I cannot make out how it missed going to you then, but

I would rather seem anything than ungrateful, and I send it now that my thanks for your kindness may be antedated (or *retro*dated rather) more than a year.

I expect to be in New York for a day or two—arriving Tuesday. I shall be at the "Albemarle."

Ever truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.]

TO C. F. BRIGGS

Elmwood, March 11, 1861.

My dear old Friend,—You see by my date that I am back again in the place I love best. I am sitting in my old garret, at my old desk, smoking my old pipe, and loving my old friends. I begin already to feel more like my old self than I have these ten years. . . . I hope I shall find my old inspiration on tap here. It would not bear bottling and transportation. . . .

Our friendship came of age this year, did you know it? I am forty-two and *it* is twenty-one.

Affectionately yours as always,

J. R. L.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, May 23, 1861.

My dear Fields,—I wish you all joy of your worm. You will find it no bad apprenticeship or prelude for that warmer and more congenial world to which all successful booksellers are believed by devout authors to go. I was going to say I was glad to be rid of my old man of the sea. But I don't believe I am. I doubt if we see the finger of Providence so readily in the stop-

page of a salary as in its beginning or increment. A bore, moreover, that is periodical gets a friendly face at last and we miss it on the whole. Even the gout men don't like to have stop *too* suddenly, lest it may have struck to the stomach.

Well, good-by, delusive royalty! I abdicate with what grace I may. I lay aside my paper crown and feather sceptre. I have been at least no Bourbon—if I have not learned much, I have forgotten a great deal.

Whatever I can do for the *Atlantic Monthly* I shall be glad to do. How much I can write I don't know, and it is not of much consequence. My head is not so strong as it used to be, and I want to rest. But I would rather write on these terms—to be paid at the end of the year if matters prosper with you; if not, to say no more about it. I think Ticknor & Fields deserve some gratitude from authors—at least I for one acknowledge my debt in that kind and would like to pay it. You have treated me well in every way, and I am not too proud to say I am grateful for it.

I wish to say in black and white that I am perfectly satisfied with the arrangements you have made. You will be surprised before long to find how easily you get on without me, and wonder that you ever thought me a necessity. It is amazing how quickly the waters close over one. He carries down with him the memory of his splash and struggle, and fancies it is still going on when the last bubble even has burst long ago. Good-by. Nature is equable. I have lost the *Atlantic*, but my cow has calved as if nothing had happened.

Cordially yours,
J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Aug. 7, 1861.

. . . I have been reading with the greatest delight Dasent's "Njal's Saga," and if you haven't it, will bring it down with me. The introduction strikes me as rather higgledy-piggledy, but the translation is excellent—simple and strong. It has revived my old desire to write the story of Leif's Voyage to Vinland, and I shouldn't wonder if something came of it. Ideal border-ruffians those old Icelanders seem to have been—such hacking and hewing and killing, and such respect for all the forms of law! The book lets you into their life public and private. I could not leave the book till I had read every word of it. I am now reading "Great Expectations" and like it much. The characters, though, seem to me unreal somehow. Dickens appears to make his characters as the Chinese do those distorted wooden images. He picks out the crookedest and knottiest roots of temperament or accidental distortion and then cuts a figure to match. But this book is full of fine touches of nature, though I can't help dreading something melodramatic to come. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Elmwood, Aug. 12, 1861.

. . . Two important events have taken place lately, which I shall mention in the order of their respective greatness. 1st. The Agricultural Festival; 2d. The election of Mayor. And now of the Cerealia. (Don't confound this with Serialia and suppose I have taken

up the *Atlantic* again.) You must know then that Cambridge boasts of two distinguished farmers—Mr. John Holmes, of Holmes Place, and him who would be, in a properly constituted order of things, the Marquess of Thompson Lot with a *p*. The marquess, fearing that (since Squire Holmes cultivated his own estate with his own hands and a camp-stool) his rival might be in want of food and too proud to confess it, generously resolved to give him a dinner, which, to save his feelings, he adroitly veiled with the pretence of an Agricultural Festival and Show of Vegetables. Dr. Howe and Mr. Storey were the other guests, "when" (as the "Annual Register" would say) the following vegetables were served up with every refinement of the culinary art. 1° Eggplants; 2° Squash; 3° Beets; 4° Carrots: 5° Potatoes; 6° Tomatoes; 7° Turnips; 8° Beans; 9° Corn; 10° Cucumbers (and not exhibited, partly out of modesty and partly for want of suitable dishes, but alluded to modestly from time to time), 11° Cabbages, 12° Salsify. Of fruits there was a variety also from the estate, consisting chiefly of 1° Raspberries and 2° Blackberries. Cider, also from the estate, was kept back out of tenderness to the guests, and because there was home-made vinegar in the casters. "After the cloth was removed" the chairman rose, and with suitable solemnity gave the first regular toast—"Speed the Plough." This was acknowledged by Mr. Holmes in a neat speech. He said that "he felt himself completely *squashed* by the abundance before him. That, as there was nothing wanting, so nothing could be marked with a *caret* ∧. That Micawber himself would have been pleased with the *turnups*,

than which who nose anything more charmingly *retroussé?* That he could say with the great Julius, *Veni, vidi, vici,* I came and saw a *beet.* That he could but stammer his astonishment at a board so cu-cumbered with delicacies. That he envied the potatoes their eyes to look on such treasures. That the Tom-martyrs were worthy the best ages of the Church, and fit successors of St. Thomas. That with such *corn* who would not be a toemartyr? That he hoped no one would criticise his remarks in a punkintilious spirit." This, as you will imagine, is quite an inadequate report of the remarks he might have made. The dinner went off with great good humor and we had cards in the evening. . . .

Your affectionate

THOMPSON LOT.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, the day before you wrote your last letter; viz., Sept. 28, 1861.

My dear Sibyl,—Will you kindly tell me what *has happened* next week, so that I may be saved from this daily debauch of newspapers? How many "heroic Mulligans" who "*meurent et ne se rendent pas*" to the reporters, with the privilege of living and surrendering to the enemy? How many "terrific conflicts" near Cheat Mountain (ominous name), with one wounded on our side, and enemy's loss supposed to be heavy? How many times we are to save Kentucky and lose our self-respect? How many times the Potomac is to be "hermetically sealed"? How often Mr. Seward is to put newspaper correspondents on the level of Secretaries of State? etc., etc. I ask all these questions because your

so-welcome letter, which I received on Wednesday the 25th, was dated to-morrow the 29th. There is something very impressive to the imagination in a letter from the future, and to be even a day in advance of the age is a good deal—how much more five or six! How does it seem to come back? Is not everything weary and stale? Or do you live all the time in a balloon, thus seeing over the lines of Time, the old enemy of us all? Pray tell me how much foolisher I shall be this day twelve-month. Well, at any rate, you can't see far enough to find the day when your friendship shall not be one of my dearest possessions. . . .

Has it begun to be cold with you? I had a little Italian bluster of brushwood fire yesterday morning, but the times are too hard with me to allow of such an extravagance except on the brink of gelation. The horror of my tax-bill has so infected my imagination that I see myself and all my friends begging entrance to the P. H. (From delicacy I use initials.) I fancy all of you gathering fuel on the Newport beaches. I hope you will have lots of wrecks—Southern privateers, of course. Don't ever overload yourself. I can't bear to think of you looking like the poor women I met in the Pineta at Ravenna just at dusk, having the air of moving druidical altars or sudden toadstools.

Our trees are beginning to turn—the maples are all ablaze, and even in our *ashes* live their wonted fires. The Virginia creeper that I planted against the old horse-chestnut stump trickles down in blood as if its support were one of Dante's living wood. The haze has begun, and the lovely mornings when one blesses the sun. I

confess our summer weather too often puts one in mind of Smithfield and the Book of Martyrs.

I have had an adventure. I have dined with a prince. After changing my mind twenty times, I at last sat down desperately and "had the honor to accept." And I was glad of it—for H. I. H.'s resemblance to his uncle is something wonderful. I had always supposed the portraits of the elder Nap imperialized, but Jerome N. looks as if he had sat for that picture where the emperor lies reading on a sofa—you remember it. A trifle weaker about the mouth, suggesting loss of teeth; but it is not so, for his teeth are exquisite. He looks as you would fancy his uncle if he were *Empereur de Ste. Hélène, roi d'Yvetot*. I sat next to Colonel Ragon, who led the forlorn hope at the taking of the Malakoff and was at the siege of Rome. He was a very pleasant fellow. (I don't feel quite sure of my English yet—J'ai tant parlé Français que je trouve beaucoup de difficulté à m'y déshabituer.) Pendant—I mean during—the dinner Ooendel Homes récitait des vers vraiment jolis. Il arrivait déjà au bout, quand M. Ragon, se tournant vers moi d'un air mêlé d'intelligence et d'interrogation, et à la même fois d'un Colomb qui fait la découverte d'un monde tout nouveau, s'écria, "C'est en vers, Monsieur, n'est ce pas?" St'anegdot charmang j'ai rahcontay ah Ooendell daypwee, avec days eclah de reer. (See Bolmar.) Mr. Everett made a speech où il y avait un soupçon de longueur. The prince replied most gracefully, as one

"Who saying nothing yet saith all."

He speaks French exquisitely—foi de professeur. Ho

parlato anche Italiano col Colonello, chi è stato sei anni in Italia, and I believe I should have tried Hebrew with the secretary of legation, who looked like a Jew, if I had had the chance. After dinner the prince was brought up and *presented to me!* Please remember that when we meet. The political part of our conversation of course I am not at liberty to repeat (!!), but he asked me whether I myself occupied of any work literary at present? to which I answered, no. Then he spoke of the factories at Lowell and Lawrence, and said how much the intelligence of the operatives had interested him, etc., etc. He said that Boston seemed to have much more movement intellectual than the rest of the country (to which I replied, *nous* le croyons, au moins); astonished himself at the freedom of opinion here, etc., at the absence of Puritanism and the like. I thought him very intelligent and thanked him for his bo deescoor o saynah Frongsay shure lays ahfair deetahlee. (See Bolmar again, which I took in my pocket.) . . .

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Oct. 12, 1861.

. . . You urged me to read poetry—to feed myself on bee bread—so that I might get into the mood of writing some. Well, I haven't been reading any, but I *have* written something *—whether poetry or no I cannot tell yet. But I want you to like it if you can. Leigh Hunt

* "The Washers of the Shroud."

speaks somewhere of our writing things for particular people, and wondering as we write if such or such a one will like it. Just so I thought of you, *after* I had written—for while I was writing I was wholly absorbed. I had just two days allowed me by Fields for the November *Atlantic*, and I got it done. It had been in my head some time, and when you see it you will remember my having spoken to you about it. Indeed, I owe it to you, for the hint came from one of those books of Souvestre's you lent me—the Breton legends. The writing took hold of me enough to leave me tired out and to satisfy me entirely as to what was the original of my head and back pains. But whether it is good or not, I am not yet far enough off to say. But *do* like it, if you can. Fields says it is "splendid," with tears in his eyes—but then I read it to him, which is half the battle. I began it as a lyric, but it *would* be too aphoristic for that, and finally flatly refused to sing at any price. So I submitted, took to pentameters, and only hope the thoughts are good enough to be preserved in the ice of the colder and almost glacier-slow measure. I think I have done wéll—in some stanzas at least—and not wasted words. It is about present matters—but abstract enough to be above the newspapers. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Elmwood, Dec. 9, 1861.

. . . I have been writing a Biglow Paper, and I feel as nervous about it as a young author not yet weaned of public favor. It was clean against my critical judgment, for I don't believe in resuscitations—we hear no good

of the *posthumous* Lazarus—but I *may* get into the vein and do some good. . . . I hope Shady Hill won't think it dull—and I have a way of flattering myself that the next will be better. Let us hope for the best. . . .

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Jan. 1, 1862.

My dear Fields,—I sent number two to Mr. Nichols this morning. If I am not mistaken it will *take*. 'Tis about Mason and Slidell, and I have ended it with a little ballad with a refrain that I hope has a kind of *tang* to it.

Do you want any more literary notices? I have some Calderon translations I should like to say a few words about.

I wish you and Ticknor a Happy New Year, and remain

Truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, March 21, 1862.

My dear Fields,—Finding a man's "genius" is something, it seems to me, that he should do for himself, and which nobody else, not even Mr. Higginson, can do for him. However, I send you Mr. Brown's "Genius" (or his essay in that direction), neatly done up and freight one eighth of a dollar. As you are a man of business the said ⅛ will probably be twelve cents; with me it invariably turns out to be thirteen, which keeps me always poor. I have made, indeed, one or two helpless struggles, but it has been no go, and a dollar is one

hundred and four cents accordingly—when I pay it—8 × 13—q. e. d.

As for the Biglow—glad you like it. If not so good as the others, the public will be sure to. I think well of the "Fable," and believe there is nothing exotic therein. I am going to kill Wilbur before long, and give a "would-have-been" obituary on him in the American style. That is, for example, "he wrote no epic, but if he had, he would have been," etc. I don't know how many of these future-conditional geniuses we have produced—many score, certainly.

You asked the other day for an article on "birds' nests." I don't find it, and think it must have been made into soup for a blue-buttoned Mandarin that dropped in to dinner. What could I do? Rats were not to be had on such short notice. That is my theory. Practically, it may turn up some day, like Mr. Brown's "Genius"—when I had given up all hopes of ever seeing it.

Good-by—yours—with a series of Biglows rising, like the visionary kings before Macbeth, to destroy all present satisfaction.

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 5, 1862.

My dear Fields,—It's no use. I reverse the gospel difficulty, and while the flesh is willing enough, the spirit is weak. My brain must lie fallow a spell—there is no superphosphate for those worn-out fields. Better no crop than small potatoes. I want to have the *passion* of the thing on me again and beget lusty Biglows.

I am all the more dejected because you have treated me so well. But I must rest awhile. My brain is out of kilter.

They say the news is good last evening, but it does not put me in spirits. I fear we shall go to trying our old fire-and-gunpowder-cement over again, and then what waste of blood and treasure and hope!

So forgive me this time, and believe me

Faithfully yours,

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Saturday, Aug. 2, 1862.

My dear Fields,—I have an idea—nay, I honestly believe even two ideas (which is perhaps more than in fairness falls to a single person); but I can't persuade the words to marry either of them—such matches are made in heaven. Did you ever (when you were a boy) play "Bat, bat, come into my hat"? *I* have since I was I won't say how old, and under the most benign conditions —fine evening, smooth lawn, lovely woman to inspire, and, more than all, a new hat. The bat that can resist all these inducements must be little better than a brick-bat, and yet who ever knew one of those wayward, noctivagant creatures to condescend even to such terms? They will stoop towards the soaring Castor, they will look into that mysterious hollow which some angry divinity has doomed us to wear, which is the Yankee's portmanteau and travelling-safe; but they will not venture where we venture the most precious (or most worthless) part of our person twenty times a day. Yet an

owl will trap you one in a minute and make no bones of it. Well, I have been pestering my two ideas (one for a fable by Mr. Wilbur, the other a dialogue with a recruiting-drum by Mr. Biglow—with *such* a burthen to it!) just in that way, but I might as well talk to Egg Rock. *If* I were an owl (don't you see?) I should have no trouble. I shouldn't consult the wishes of my bat, but just gobble him up and done with it.

Truth is, my dear Fields, I am amazed to think how I ever kept my word about the six already caught. I look back and wonder how in great H. I ever did it. But Sunday is always a prosperous day with me; so pray wait till Monday, and then I shall either have done my job or shall know it can't be done.

But what shall one say? Who feels like asking more recruits to go down into McClellan's beautiful trap, from which seventy thousand men can't get away? Hasn't he pinned his army there like a bug in a cabinet?—only you don't have to *feed* your bug! I feel "blue as the blue forget-me-not," and don't see how we are to be saved but by a miracle, and miracles aren't wrought for folks without heads, at least since the time of St. Denys.

I am much obliged to you for introducing me to Dr. Brown's book, which I like very much. There is a *soul* in it somehow that one does not find in many books, and he seems to me a remarkably good critic, where his Scoticism doesn't come in his way.

Give me a victory and I will give you a poem; but I am now clear down in the bottom of the well, where I see the Truth too near to make verses of.

Truly yours,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Xmas Night, 1862.

. . . I send the poor verses.* You will see that I accepted your criticism and left out the crowding stanza. I have also made some corrections—chiefly because I altered the last stanza but one in order to get in "feed every skill," and then found the same rhymes staring at me from the last. So, as I could not copy it again and did not like to send anything with corrections in it, I e'en weakened the last stanza a little to make all square. You see what it is to write in rhyme, and not to remember what you have written. It is safer to repeat one's self in prose.

I hope all of you have had a good Christmas. I don't see why any national misfortunes should prevent our being glad over the birth of Good into the world eighteen centuries and a half ago. To me it is always a delightful day, and I, dull as I may be, come to dinner with a feeling that at least I am helping in the traditional ceremonies. One can say at least with a good conscience, as he lays his head on his pillow, like one of My Lord Tennyson's jurymen, *Caput apri detuli—I* brought the bore's head. With which excellent moral, and love to all,

I am always your loving

J. R. L.

Asked in the very friendliest way
To send some word prolific,
Some pearl of wit, from Boston Bay
To astonish the Pacific,

* To be read at a lecture on himself, which was to be given in California, by the Rev. T. Starr King.

I fished one day and dredged the next,
And, when I had not found it,
"Our bay is deep," I murmured, vext,
"But has vast flats around it!"

You fancy us a land of schools,
Academies, and colleges,
That love to cram our emptiest fools
With 'onomies and 'ologies,
Till, fired, they rise and leave a line
Of light behind like rockets—
Nay, if you ask them out to dine,
Bring lectures in their pockets.

But, 'stead of lecturing other folks,
To be *yourself* the topic;
To bear the slashes, jerks, and pokes
Of scalpels philanthropic—
It makes one feel as if he'd sold,
In some supreme emergence,
His *corpus vile*, and were told,
"You're wanted by the surgeons!"

I felt, when begged to send a verse
By way of friendly greeting,
As if you'd stopped me in my hearse
With "Pray, address the meeting!"
For, when one's made a lecture's theme,
One feels, in sad sincerity,
As he were dead, or in a dream
Confounded with posterity.

I sometimes, on the long-sloped swells
Of deeper songs careening,
Shaking sometimes my cap and bells,
But still with earnest meaning,

Grow grave to think my leaden lines
Should make so long a journey,
And there among your golden mines
Be uttered by attorney.

What says the East, then, to the West,
The old home to the new one,
The mother-bird upon the nest
To the far-flown, but true one?
Fair realm beneath the evening-star,
Our western gate to glory,
You send us faith and cheer from far;
I send you back a story.

We are your Past, and, short or long,
What leave Old Days behind them
Save bits of wisdom and of song
For very few to find them?
So, children, if my tale be old,
My moral not the newest,
Listen to Grannam while they're told,
For both are of the truest.

Far in a farther East than this,
When Nature still held league with Man,
And shoots of New Creation's bliss
Through secret threads of kindred ran;
When man was more than shops and stocks,
And earth than dirt to fence and sell,
Then all the forests, fields, and rocks
Their upward yearning longed to tell.

The forests muse of keel and oar;
The field awaits the ploughshare's seam;
The rock in palace-walls would soar;
To rise by service all things dream.

And so, when Brahma walked the earth,
The golden vein beneath the sward
Cried, "Take me, Master; all my worth
Lies but in serving thee, my lord!

"Without thee gold is only gold,
A sullen slave that waits on man,
Sworn liegeman of the Serpent old
To thwart the Maker's nobler plan;
But, ductile to thy plastic will,
I yield as flexible as air,
Speak every tongue, feed every skill,
Take every shape of good and fair.

"The soul of soul is loyal hope,
The wine of wine is friendship's juice,
The strength of strength is gracious scope,
The gold of gold is noble use;
Through thee alone I am not dross;
Through thee, O master-brain and heart!
I climb to beauty and to art,
I bind the wound and bear the Cross."

TO MISS NORTON

Elmwood, Dec. 31, 1862.

. . . I wish you all a Happy New Year! The first of January always comes to me, I confess, with a kind of sadness.

"Time hath, my lord, a wallet at his back
Wherein he puts—alms for Oblivion."

This one comes in storm. But let us have a cheerful confidence that we are worth damning, for that implies a chance also of something better. . . .

Affectionately always,

J. R. L.

TO MRS. FRANCIS G. SHAW

Elmwood, April 6, 1863.

. . . I believe it one of the most happy things in the world, as we grow older, to have as many ties as possible with whatever is best in our own past, and to be pledged as deeply as may be to our own youth. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Aug. 28, 1863.

My dear Sarah,—Not a day has passed since I heard the dreadful news* that I have not thought tenderly of you and yours; but I could not make up my mind to write you, and the longer I put it off the harder it grew. I have tried several times, and broken down. I knew you would be receiving all manner of consolation, and, as I know that consolation is worse than nothing, I would not add mine. There is nothing for such a blow as that but to bow the head and bear it. We may think of many things that in some measure make up for such a loss, but we can think of nothing that will give us back what we have lost. The best is that, so far as he was concerned, all was noble and of the highest example.

I have been writing something about Robert, and if, after keeping a little while, it should turn out to be a poem, I shall print it; but not unless I think it some way worthy of what I feel, however far the best verse falls short of noble living and dying such as his.

* Of the death of her only son, the gallant Colonel Shaw, one of the most heroic of the youths who offered their lives in the Civil War to their country and to freedom.

I would rather have my name known and blest, as his will be, through all the hovels of an outcast race, than blaring from all the trumpets of repute. . . .

If the consolation of the best is wearisome, it is yet something to have the sympathy of every one, as I know you and Frank have. God bless and sustain you!

Your always loving

J. R. Lowell.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Monday, Aug. 31, 1863.

My dear Fields,—I really do not know what to say. You give me altogether too much and lay me under an obligation which I shall have confidence enough in your friendliness to rest under for the present, because the money will be of use to me. But I shall consider myself as owing you more verses than you debit me with. What annoys me is that I fear you took the badinage in my last note to you for a hint, which it was very far from being, I assure you. However, you have driven the sharpest kind of spur into my flank, and I shall not rest till I have written something as good as I can for the *Atlantic*.

I have a few things that may help you in your edition of "Shakespeare's Sonnets." In the first place, print from the edition of Little & Brown, by Child. It is by much the best text in my judgment. There are still some obscurities which set me daft, and which you will have to leave, I fear, as you find them. Here follow a few of my marginal pencillings, which you may take for what they are worth.

First, read carefully Sonnet v., and then consider these lines in the sixth:

"Make sweet some phial; *treasure* thou some place
With Beauty's *treasure* ere it be self-killed."

This should read, I have scarce a doubt,

"Make sweet some phial; *pleasure* thou some place
With Beauty's treasure, ere *itself* (i. e. Beauty) be killed."

I think the first *treasure* a mere misprint, and *pleasure* carries out the conceit in the first half of the verse, "*make sweet* some phial."

Sonnet xxiii.:

"So I, *for fear of trust*—"

I don't understand this. Same sonnet, "O let my *books*" —should be *looks?* and farther on, "that more hath more" is, I think, sophisticated.

Sonnet xxxiii.: after "heavenly alchemy" should be a comma, not a semicolon.

"Stealing unseen to west with *this* disgrace."

I suspect Shakespeare wrote *his*.

Sonnet xxxv.:

"Excusing thy sins, more than thy sins are,"

is cimmerian to me. I am inclined to think there should be a semicolon after "amiss," and then

"Excusing thy sin 's more than thy sins are."

That is, all men make faults. *I* do, in finding comparisons to make "thy sin seem venial," and, "in excusing thee, sin worse than thou."

Sonnet xlvii.:

"For thou *not* farther than my thoughts," etc.,

should be *no*. The original edition has *nor* for noe—as I think. *No* is more simple and idiomatic.

Sonnet li.:

"Shall neigh (no dull flesh) in his fiery race."

'Tis scarce probable that Shakespeare, who in "Cymbeline" wrote with such disgust of the boar that cries "Oh!" and mounts, should have thought a neigh much less animal than a grunt. In the original there are no brackets, and I fancy the *neigh* is a blunder for some active verb governing "dull flesh"—but *what* one, I despair of.

Sonnet lxiii.:

"And they shall live, and he in them still green"

should be

"And they shall live, and he in them, still green."

The *evergreen* plainly qualifies both the *they* and *he*.

Sonnet lxv.:

"Shall Time's best jewel from Time's chest lie hid?"

What does that mean? *To lie hidden from a chest* is hardly worthy of Shakespeare's exquisite precision of phrase. I think he wrote "from Time's *quest*," and then the "lie hid" is set right.

Sonnet lxvii.:

"And steal dead *seeing* of his living hue,"

should be (meo periculo) "dead *seeming*." Read the context. Same sonnet,

> "And proud of many," etc.

I don't understand it, and suspect it grievously to be stark nonsense as it stands.

Sonnet lxxxiv.:

> "Who is it that says most that can say more
> Than this rich praise,—that you alone are you?
> In whose confine immured is the store
> Which should example where your equal grew."

should read, I think, as I have corrected in margin. After "dignifies his story" should be a colon for a comma.

Sonnet lxxxviii.: after "attainted" should be a comma, not a semicolon.

Sonnet xcviii.:

> "They were but sweet, but figures of delight."

This is nonsense. *Only* sweet? What more can a man ask in this life? Shakespeare wrote,

> "They were, *best sweet*, but," etc.

Sonnet cxv.:

> "When I was certain o'er incertainty,
> Crowning the present, doubting of the rest."

There is something wrong here. One would not like such a loose linch-pin in his triumphal car. He could not be "certain o'er incertainty" so long as he was "*doubting* of the rest." It is *just possible* that it may have stood

"Might I not then say, *Now I love you best*
When I was certain? Our incertainty
Crowning the present, doubting of the rest."

Or else,

"o'er incertainty
Crowning the present."

Sonnet cxx.: "*My* deepest sense" should, I guess, read *By*, for it applies to both of them.

Some of my suggestions may be of use to you. Some are mere doubts to set your wits at work. You may depend upon it, the text even now is very far from Shakespeare's meaning. There are many passages besides the ones I have mentioned which are quite beyond my comprehension. That, of course, is none of your business as an editor, but it has always seemed to me droll how long the world would read nonsense on trust without the least suspicion. My emendations on the sixth, sixty-fifth, and sixty-seventh I think will stand reflection. But if any difficulties occur to you in printing, I wish you would tell me what they are, for I like to worry these rats that eat out the sense, even if I cannot exterminate them. Shall you print the "Lover's Complaint"? *That*, I think, is almost hopeless in some places.

Renewing my thanks, I remain

Always cordially yours,

J. R. L.

TO THOMAS HUGHES

Harvard College, Sept. 9, 1863.

My dear Hughes,—Will you do anything that lies in

your way for my young friend Mr. Lincoln, and very much oblige me thereby? He wishes particularly to see you, and would like a few hints about employing his very short time in London well. He has been one of our tutors here.

To almost any other Englishman I should think it needful to explain that he is not President Lincoln, you are all so "shady" in our matters. The *Times*, I see, has now sent over an "Italian" to report upon us—a clever man, but a double foreigner, as an Italian with an English wash over him. Pray, don't believe a word he says about our longing to go to war with England. We are all as cross as terriers with your kind of neutrality, but the last thing we want is another war. If the rebel iron-clads are allowed to come out, there might be a change.

If you can give Mr. Lincoln any hints or helps for seeing Oxford you would be doing him a great kindness, and adding another to the many you have done me.

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Nov. 30, 1863.

My dear Fields,—You know I *owe* you a poem—*two* in my reckoning, and here is one of them. If this is not to your mind, I can hammer you out another. I have a feeling that some of it is *good*—but is it too long? I want to fling my leaf on dear Shaw's grave. Perhaps I was wrong in stiffening the feet of my verses a little, in order to give them a kind of slow funeral tread. But I

conceived it so, and so it would be. I wanted the poem a little *monumental*, perhaps I have made it *obituary*. But tell me just how it strikes you, and don't be afraid of my nerves. They can stand much in the way of friendly frankness, and besides, I find I am acquiring a vice of modesty as I grow older. I used to try the trumpet now and then; I am satisfied now with a pipe (provided the tobacco is good).

I have been reading the "Wayside Inn" with the heartiest admiration. The introduction is masterly—so simple, clear, and strong. Let 'em put in all their *ifs* and *buts;* I don't wonder the public are hungrier and thirstier for his verse than for that of all the rest of us put together. Curtis's article was excellent. I read also Hale's story with singular pleasure, increased when I learned whose it was. Get more of him. He has that lightness of touch and ease of narration that are worth everything. I think it the cleverest story in the *Atlantic* since "My Double" (also his), which appeared in *my* time. I confess I am rather weary of the high-pressure style.

Yours always,

J. R. L.

TO J. L. MOTLEY *

Cambridge, July 28, 1864.

My dear Motley, — I write you on a matter of business. You may have heard that Norton and I have undertaken to edit the *North American* — a rather Sisyphian job, you will say. It wanted three

* Reprinted from the Correspondence of J. L. Motley, ii. 167.

chief elements to be successful. It wasn't thoroughly, that is, thick and thinly, loyal, it wasn't lively, and it had no particular opinions on any particular subject.

It was an eminently safe periodical, and accordingly was in great danger of running aground. It was an easy matter, of course, to make it loyal—even to give it opinions (such as they were), but to make it alive is more difficult. Perhaps the day of the quarterlies is gone by, and those megatheria of letters may be in the mere course of nature withdrawing to their last swamps to die in peace. Anyhow, here we are with our megatherium on our hands, and we must strive to find what will fill his huge belly, and keep him alive a little longer. You see what's coming. Pray imagine all the fine speeches and God-bless-your-honors, and let me proceed at once to hold out the inevitable hat. Couldn't you write us an article now and then? It would be a great help to us, and you shall have *carte blanche* as to subject. Couldn't you write on the natural history of that diplomatic cuttlefish of Schleswig-Holstein without forfeiting your ministerial equanimity? The creature has be-muddled himself with such a cloud of ink that he is almost indiscernible to the laic eye. Or on recent German literature? Or on Austria and its resources? Or, in short, on anything that may be solemn in topic and entertaining in treatment? Our pay isn't much, but you shall have five dollars a page, and the object is in a sense patriotic. If the thought be dreadful, see if you can't find also something pleasing in it, as Young managed to do in "Eternity." Imagine the difference in

the tone of the *Review*. If you are a contributor, of course it will always be "Our amiable and accomplished minister at the Court of Vienna, who unites in himself," etc., etc., etc.; or else, "In such a state of affairs it was the misfortune of this country to be represented at Vienna by a minister as learned in Low Dutch as he was ignorant of high statesmanship," etc., etc. I pull my beaver over my eyes and mutter "*Bewa-r-re!*" etc. But, seriously, you can help us a great deal, and I really do not care what you write about if you will only write.

As to our situation here, you are doubtless well informed. My own feeling has always been confident, and it is now hopeful. If Mr. Lincoln is re-chosen, I think the war will soon be over. If not, there will be attempts at negotiation, during which the rebels will recover breath, and then war again with more chances in their favor. Just now everything looks well. The real campaign is clearly in Georgia, and Grant has skilfully turned all eyes to Virginia by taking the command there in person. Sherman is a very able man, in dead earnest, and with a more powerful army than that of Virginia. It is true that the mercantile classes are longing for peace, but I believe the people are more firm than ever. So far as I can see, the opposition to Mr. Lincoln is both selfish and factious, but it is much in favor of the right side that the Democratic party have literally not so much as a single plank of principle to float on, and the sea runs high. They don't know what they are in favor of—hardly what they think it safe to be against. And I doubt if they will gain much by go-

ing into an election on negatives. I attach some importance to the peace negotiation at Niagara (ludicrous as it was) as an indication of despair on the part of the rebels, especially as it was almost coincident with Clanricarde's movement in the House of Lords. Don't be alarmed about Washington. The noise made about it by the Copperheads is enough to show there is nothing dangerous in any rebel movements in that direction. I have no doubt that Washington is as safe as Vienna. What the Fremont defection may accomplish I can't say, but I have little fear from it. Its strength lies solely among our German Radicals, the most impracticable of mankind. If our population had been as homogeneous as during the Revolutionary war, our troubles would have been over in a year. All our foreign trading population have no fatherland but the till, and have done their best to destroy our credit. All our snobs, too, are Secesh.

But I always think of Virgil's

> "Pur a noi converrà vincer la punga
> . . . se non—tal ne s' offerse."

We have the promise of God's Word and God's nature on our side. Moreover, I have never believed, do not now believe, in the possibility of separation. The instinct of the people on both sides is against it. Is not the "*coup de grâce*" of the *Alabama* refreshing? That an American sloop of war should sink a British ship of equal force, manned by British sailors and armed with British guns in the British Channel! There is something to make John Bull reflect.

Now do write something for us, if you can, and with kindest remembrances to Mrs. Motley,

Believe me always,

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO W. D. HOWELLS

Elmwood, July 28, 1864.

My dear Sir,—Your article* is in print, and I was very glad to get it. Pray instruct me to whom I shall pay over your *honorarium*.

We don't pay very well, but 'tis better than nothing. Write us another on "Modern Italian Literature," or anything you like. I don't forget my good opinion of you and my interest in your genius. Therefore I may be frank.

You have enough in you to do honor to our literature. Keep on cultivating yourself. You know what I thought. You must sweat the Heine out of you as men do mercury. You are as good as Heine—remember that.

I have been charmed with your Venetian letters in the *Advertiser*. They are admirable, and fill a gap. They make the most careful and picturesque *study* I have ever seen on any part of Italy. They are the thing itself.

Pray introduce me with my best regards to Mrs. Howells, and believe me, with real interest,

Your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

Only think of losing Hawthorne! I cannot stomach it.

* For the *North American Review*, on "Recent Italian Comedy."

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Aug. 1, 1864.

. . . I am enjoying vacation as usual, with proofs ("Old Dramatists"*) every day. . . .

I shall say nothing about politics, my dear Charles, for I feel rather down in the mouth, and moreover I have not had an idea for so long that I shouldn't know one if I saw it. The war and its constant expectation and anxiety oppress me. I cannot think. . . .

. . . I have read Boccaccio nearly through since Commencement—I mean the "Decameron," in order to appreciate his style. I find it very charming, and him clearly the founder of modern prose. A singular sweetness, ease, and grace. Nothing came near it for centuries. And then the just visible unobtrusive play of humor—a kind of heat-lightning round the horizon of his mind without a harmful bolt in the whole of it. And then there is no great mischief in his dirt. When Casti versifies his stories you feel this—for Casti makes them bad. . . . I am now taking a good draught of old favorites, Hakluyt and Purchas. . . .

Your always loving

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Thursday, Aug. 18, 1864.

My dear Charles,—The other day Field† came to see

* For a projected series of select Old Plays, never carried into execution. A single volume was printed, but not published.

† The late John W. Field, a man of singular friendliness, of whom Lowell, shortly after making his acquaintance, wrote:

"Few things to charm me more can nature yield
Than a broad, open, breezy, high-viewed Field."

us, and told me that he was going to Ashfield next Saturday, whereupon I thought we could not do better than come together. He will at least mitigate my dulness, which for several weeks has neighbored on idiocy, having had a headache *all* the time—which makes it lucky 'twas vacation.

I believe Fanny wrote to Jane how (like a fool) I went down East with a notion of exploring the Coast of Maine in the company of a Congressional Committee. I saw the chairman—who seemed amazed to see *me*—and a roomful of his satellites (of the clean-dicky and dirty-shirt kind); found that we were to be trotted round on show like a menagerie; and came straight home again, wiser, hotter, and headachier. I find that one's ears grow with his growth.

Except this insane escapade, I have not stirred from my study since vacation began—unless I count one dinner at the Club. To-day I am going to help dine Mr. Chase. I shall come home sorry that I went, I know; but hope always gets the better of experience with me. I almost think I should be willing to live over again—though I ought to know better by this time.

O Frances Dobbs!
This life is cobs
Without one grain of corn:
'Tis wake and eat—
Sleep—then repeat,
Since ever I was born!

And yet we fear
Our tread-mill here
May cease its weary round,

And think 'tis not
All one to rot
Above or under ground!

This dining, by the way, is a funny thing. Did it ever occur to mortal man to give a dinner to some one who really wanted it? I think it would be rather a good lark to dine the *hungriest* man in Boston. Wouldn't I like to dine old Farragut (*feragut*) though! By Jove! the sea-service hasn't lost its romance, in spite of iron turtles. And isn't wood, after all, the thing? I believe the big guns will bring us back to wooden ships again. For one lucky shot may sink one of these hogs in armor. By the way, Sir Richard Hawkins discusses this very matter of big shot two hundred and fifty years ago, and decides in favor of large bores, because the ball will make a leak that can't be stopped. . . .

I believe I was glad to see that Arthur was a prisoner. He is safe, at any rate for the present, which is a comfort. He did all a man could in going. He offered his life, and if Fate will not take it we ought to be thankful. . . . As John [Holmes] says (he has dined with us *twice* this week!), "It's better to suffer from too little bread than from too much lead." . . .

TO JAMES T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Oct. 18, 1864.

. . . It's a great compliment you pay me that, whenever I have fairly begun to edit a journal, you should buy it.* I heard some time ago that the thing was

* Messrs. Fields, Osgood & Co. had purchased the *North American Review*.

talked of, but hear it is concluded just as I was about writing you.

Firstly: Whar is Biglow? Let Echo repeat her customary observation, adding only that I began one, but it would not go. I had idees in plenty, but, all I could do, they would not marry themselves to immortal worse. Not only did I wish to write, for there was a chance of a thousand, but I wanted money—so there can be no doubt I was in earnest. But so it was that all my idees aforesaid, though I could hear them shuffling up and down the cloisters of my brain, would have no more to do with each other than Carthusians, and *could not* enter upon any of the matrimonial arrangements above noted because of their vow. And in the midst of all came such a cold! with a catarrh at one end of my breathing tubes, a double snuffle in the middle, and a cough at the bottom. It was no go—I mean the poem; the cough went firmly and goes still—such a hacking cough that I should like to bind it out to a wood-chopper.

As for the *Novel*, in the first place I can't write one nor conceive how any one else can; and in the next—I would sooner be hanged than begin to print anything before I had wholly finished it. Moreover, what can a man do who is in a tread-mill? I believe that but for the unfortunate accident which forced me to quit the Castle of Idlesse and in some sort accept the curse of Adam by being busy without being useful, I should not only have produced more but better of its kind. I am getting bark-bound. The truth is, my brain requires a long brooding time ere it can hatch anything. As soon as the *life* comes into the thing it is quick enough in clipping the shell.

As for "terms," I know you will be as liberal as I wish you to be, and that is enough. You always have been so. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Wednesday, Jan., 1865.

. . . I am not a fool, and you are all wrong about England. You think better of them than they deserve, and I like them full as well as you do. But because there are a few noble fellows there like Goldwin Smith whom one instinctively loves, it doesn't blind me to the fact that they are not England and never will be—that England is an idea, that America is another, that they are innately hostile, and that they will fight us one of these days. God forbid! you say. Amen! say I. But we are fighting the South at this moment on no other grounds, and there are some fine fellows at the South too. England just now is a monstrous sham, as we were five years ago when she smiled on us as one augur did at another. Now, I don't believe in being meek towards foreign nations that are never *senza guerra* (so far as we are concerned) *ne' cor de' suoi tiranni.* But I do believe in doing what is right, whether as nations or men. As for any row that the New York papers may have made about Coursal, I have not to learn at forty-five that men always behave like boys when they are angry, and the government has not gone mad after all. Were the English wiser about the *Trent?* About the *Florida?* I should not be a crazy statesman, but a poet doesn't deserve to have been born in a country if he can't instinctively express what his countrymen have in their

hearts. No nation is great enough to put up with insult, for it is the one advantage of greatness to be strong enough to protect herself from it. I think a war with England would be the greatest calamity but one—the being afraid of it. I would do everything to avoid it, except not telling her what I think of her in return for the charming confidences with which she so constantly favors us. Goldwin Smith tells us she has changed since 1815. But has there been any great war since? Especially any great naval war? The root of our bitterness is not that she *used* to do so and so, but that we know she would do it again. The wolf was wrong in eating the lamb because its grandmother had muddied the stream, but it would be a silly lamb that expected to be friends with any animal whose grandmother was a wolf. Farewell. I won't fight *you*, because my father loved your grandfather and I love you.

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, April 13, 1865.

. . . The news, my dear Charles, is from Heaven. I felt a strange and tender exaltation. I wanted to laugh and I wanted to cry, and ended by holding my peace and feeling devoutly thankful. There is something magnificent in having a country to love. It is almost like what one feels for a woman. Not so tender, perhaps, but to the full as self-forgetful. I worry a little about reconstruction, but am inclined to think that matters will very much settle themselves. But I must run to my tread-mill. Love and joy to all!

Ever yours,

J. R. L.

TO MISS NORTON

Elmwood, July 25, 1865.

My dear Jane,—However statures and wits may degenerate, and we become, as Donne says, "our fathers' shadows cast at noon," July keeps his old force and is pleasing himself to-day with a noble display of it. It is so hot that the very locusts are dumb and cannot endure to carry on their own trade of spinning out "their long-drawn, red-hot wires of shrilly song," as they are called in a lost poem of Pindar's, from which I translate by direct inspiration of a scholiast turned table-tipper. Each under his cool leaf is taking his siesta. There is an unpleasing moisture even in the slender palms of the flies that fondle the restiff tip of my nose. The thin gray lives of mosquitoes are burnt up and evaporate. My anxious shirt-collar still stiffly holds its undiminished state, but with a damp foreboding of its doom. In short, dear Jane, it is just such a day as the Clerk of the Weather, abusing his opportunities, invariably appoints for public festivities—just such a day as were the Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday of last week. Nevertheless, I am here among my books and I am in a literal sense alive. I eat and smoke and sleep and go through all the nobler functions of a man mechanically still, and wonder at myself as at something outside of and alien to Me. For have I not worked myself lean on an "Ode for Commemoration"? Was I not so rapt with the fervor of conception as I have not been these ten years, losing my sleep, my appetite, and my flesh, those attributes to which I before alluded as nobly

uniting us in a common nature with our kind? Did I not for two days exasperate everybody that came near me by reciting passages in order to try them on? Did I not even fall backward and downward to the old folly of hopeful youth, and think I had written something *really* good at last? And am I not now enduring those retributive dumps which ever follow such sinful exultations, the Erynnyes of Vanity? Did not I make John Holmes and William Story shed tears by my recitation of it (my ode) in the morning, both of 'em fervently declaring it was "noble"? Did not even the silent Rowse declare 'twas in a higher mood than much or most of later verse? Did not I think, in my nervous exhilaration, that 'twould be *the* feature (as reporters call it) of the day? And, after all, have I not a line in the *Daily Advertiser* calling it a "graceful poem" (or "some graceful verses," I forget which), which "was received with applause"? Why, Jane, my legs are those of grasshoppers, and my head is an autumn threshing-floor, still beating with the alternate flails of strophe and antistrophe, and an infinite virtue is gone out of me somehow—but it seems *not* into my verse as I dreamed. Well, well, Charles will like it—but then he always does, so what's the use? I am Icarus now with the cold salt sea over him instead of the warm exulting blue of ether. I am gone under, and I will never be a fool again. You read between the lines, don't you, my dear old friend, if I may dare to call a woman so? You know my foibles —women always know our foibles, confound them!— though they always wink at the right moment and seem not to see—bless them! Like a boy, I mistook my

excitement for inspiration, and here I am in the mud. You see also I am a little disappointed and a little few (*un petit peu*) vexed. I did *not* make the hit I expected, and am ashamed at having been again tempted into thinking I could write *poetry*, a delusion from which I have been tolerably free these dozen years. . . .

26th.

The Storys have got home and look as young as ever. I first saw William on Commencement day, and glad enough I was. A friendship counting nearly forty years is the finest kind of shade-tree I know of. One is safe from thunder beneath it, as under laurel—nay, more safe, for the critical bolts do not respect the sacred tree any more than if it were so much theatrical green baize. To be sure, itself is of the harmless theatrical kind often enough. Well, he and two more came up hither after dinner, and we talked and laughed and smoked and drank Domdechanei till there wasn't a bald head nor a gray hair among us. Per Bacco and tobacco, how wisely silly we were! I forgot for a few blessed hours that I was a professor, and felt as if I were something real. But Phi Beta came next day, and *wasn't* I tired! Presiding from 9 A.M. till 6½ P.M. is no joke, and then up next morning at ½ past 4 to copy out and finish my ode. I have not got cool yet (I mean as to nerves), and lie awake at night thinking how much better my verses might have been, only I can't make 'em so. Well, I am printing fifty copies in 4to, and Charles will like it, as I said before, and I sha'n't, because I thought too well of it at first. . . .

Yours always,

J. R. L.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Aug. 28, 1865.

My dear Charles,—Why I did not come to Ashfield, as I hoped and expected, I will tell you when I see you. Like that poor Doctor in the "Inferno," I have seen before me as I sat in reverie those yellow hills with their dark-green checkers of woods and the blue undulation of edging mountains (which we looked at together that lovely Sunday morning last year) I can't say how often. Perhaps I do not wish to see them again —and in one sense I do not, they are such a beautiful picture in my memory. For I have a theory—or rather it belongs to my temperament to believe—that there are certain things that one should take a sip at, as a bird does at a spring, and then fly away forever, taking with us a snatch of picture, the trees, the sky with its cloud-drifts of warm snow—yes, and our own image in the sliding wave too. We do not care to see our own foot-prints on the edge again, still less to tread in them. Somehow the geese always follow where the song-birds have been, and leave their slumpy stars in the mud themselves have made. There, by ginger! I meant to give the merest hint of a sentiment, and I have gone splash into a moral. I did not mean it, but I cannot cure myself. I shall never be a poet till I get out of the pulpit, and New England was all meeting-house when I was growing up. But I assure you I am never dull but in spite of myself.

Somehow, this cool, beautiful summer day I feel my heart go out towards you all, and am not writing because

I ought. I fancy you up there in your little withdrawing-chamber of a town, with a hundred miles of oak "sported" against the world, and it makes me happy. And when one is happy what a beautiful frame it sets the world in! Even the flies sing and do not buzz. Not one of them fancies himself an eagle and insists on perching upon the promontory of my nose, to look down in sublime isolation on my limitless forest of beard. The trees are all alive with the west wind. I can hear the faint surf of the black-walnut at the foot of the garden as I write. In the hot weather a day or two ago it seemed only to fan itself languidly, as women do in church to prove that they are not asleep during a dull sermon. Even the locust's cry is no longer a mere impertinent *feeze* of sound or a death-whiz, as if the hot sun-ray were impaling him, but has something of satisfaction in it, as if life were wholesome warmth, indeed, but not mere frying. Altogether it seems a lovely day, and accordingly I walk to the Port presently—to pay my income tax. I must take care—I am on the edge of another moral pitfall. . . .

Your loving

J. R. L.

TO THE SAME

Oct. 12, 1865.

. . . I have been reading away steadily at Lessing till I have almost lost my moorings in the modern world. I am on his correspondence now, and find I have read 462 pages octavo out of 665 in the first volume, which is encouraging progress. However, I read all the time. I find, somewhat to my surprise, from his letters that he

had the imaginative temperament in all its force. Can't work for months together; if he tries, his forehead drips with *Angstschweiss;* feels ill and looks well—in short, is as pure a hypochondriac as the best. This has had a kind of unhealthy interest for me, for I never read my own symptoms so well described before. It is what people call hypped—but nothing will ever persuade me that I have been well these four years past. I am making up my mind to *be* well, however, and if I can sell some of my land and slip my neck out of this collar that galls me so, I should be a man again. I am not the stuff that professors are made of. Better in some ways, worse in others. . . . Anyhow my professorship is wearing me out. . . .

Yours always,

J. R. L.

TO W. D. HOWELLS

Elmwood, Nov. 2, 1865.

My dear Sir,—I have read your articles in the *Nation* with a sense of what I may call personal pleasure that is particularly agreeable. And I have a *tell* for you, as the children say; so open your mouth and shut your eyes that I may pop in my plum! I read the article about Pompeii without the least suspicion whose it was, and found it charming. Why, here is somebody, I said to myself, who writes about Italy just as I would like to have written if I could.

It is altogether good. In the other, of course, I knew you, for you had spoken of it, and so perhaps my judgment might be less impartial. You are doing just what I should wish you to do. The danger of our literature

(with plenty of talent) seems to me to be carelessness and want of scholarly refinement. That is the rock I see ahead just now, and I fear we may go to pieces on it if we don't look sharp. Perhaps you will be inclined to send back a stone at the glass house of the "Biglow Papers"—but 'twas for this very reason that I made a balance for Hosea in the pedantic parson. And then I had an object to reach which I *did* reach, and could have reached in no other way. But what I feel is (whether a sinner myself or not) that we especially need refinement in this country as a prophylactic against democracy misunderstood. And as for really good things, that is true here which is true everywhere—they cannot be made by any but those who have served a long apprenticeship—longer, it may be, here than elsewhere, since we have less hereditary and accumulated culture. Well, never mind; I like your articles as heartily as I could wish.

I write now to ask you if you could not write a paper for the *North American* on the Dante Festival? I forget whether you were in Florence at the time or not. If you were, here is a subject just in your own line, full of picturesque sentiment. I gave the Mantova article to Mr. Norton on his return from Ashfield, where he had spent the summer, and forgot when I saw him again to ask when he would print it. I will speak with him again and let you know. He "makes up" the *Review* as he likes, for I have not time to do anything about it.

It is possible that I may come to New York during the winter vacation. If so, I shall have the pleasure of

seeing you again and talking over matters of mutual interest. Meanwhile I remain

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO SYDNEY H. GAY

Elmwood, Dec. 21, 1865.

My dear Gay,—Is "fifty dollars any object with me?" I should think so! If greenbacks of that figure grew upon trees, I should be a lusty climber. But neither are odes to be found on every bush. A great deal of virtue must go out of a man if he would write a good one, and it's no use whistling for the wind of inspiration. And it takes time, my dear Sydney—not so much for the birth, as for the conception and shaping of the harmonious parts. You must have first your chaos of jostling elements and forces, the fermentation of the yet uncrystallized idea; then the brooding of the creative imagination; and then the birth of your star or comet or, unhappily too often, of your meteor, which falls to earth a shapeless jelly. I know so well how certain things are done that—I can't do them!

I might have written you, perhaps, a rhymed editorial—but an ode? The occasion was a good one, and I am half inclined to meditate upon it and see if I can't write one *après coup* and print it in my next volume, whenever that comes. I must claim for my verses, if no other merit, at least that of forethought and some conception of the serious demands of the Muse.

As for pay, I am lucky, though it puzzles me. The public, with a shocking want of discrimination, buy ev-

erybody's books but mine, and yet my verses are worth as much to a magazine as any other author's. However, that's their affair, and not mine. For some years I have had twice fifty for whatever I write, and three or four times fifty for a long poem.

I was very glad to hear from you again, and I hope to see you and other old friends this winter, as I have promised to go to New York in vacation. . . . Remember me to whoever remembers me, and I am as always,

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

V

1866–1868

LIFE AT ELMWOOD. — STUDIES. — LECTURES. — POLITICAL AND LITERARY ESSAYS IN THE *NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* AND THE *ATLANTIC MONTHLY*. — THE *NATION*. — THE "COMMEMORATION ODE." — "THE NIGHTINGALE IN THE STUDY."

LETTERS TO E. L. GODKIN, E. C. STEDMAN, LESLIE STEPHEN, C. E. NORTON, H. W. LONGFELLOW, T. W. HIGGINSON, J. T. FIELDS, MISS NORTON, J. B. THAYER, T. W. PARSONS, W. D. HOWELLS.

TO E. L. GODKIN

Elmwood, Jan. 10, 1866.

My dear Sir,— . . . I have got something half written for you and hope to finish it to-day—some macaronic verses on the editorial sham-fight at Richmond, under some such title as "Kettleo-Pottomachia." I am not yet sure whether it is not dull. However, I will send it, and you can use it or not as you like. I had begun an essay on "Autographs," when I was drawn off by this. Meanwhile I have raked out of my desk a little poem which I wrote for an autograph for the St. Louis Fair two years ago. (The Muse doesn't come often to Professors!) I do not know that it has ever

been printed and don't think it has. I send it merely to justify my name on your list of contributors.* You can put my initials under it—otherwise I prefer the anonymous. I find excellent matter in the *Nation*, and always read it *through*. Pray tell Mr. Howells with how much pleasure I read his German sketch—and not I alone.

I will send you the macaronics in a day or two, and you may put them in the fire if you like. . . .

Faithfully yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Jan. 19, 1866.

My dear Godkin,—Ecce iterum Crispinus! Here's Monsieur Tonson come again! It never rains but it pours, and you've lent *me* your umberil! You remember how Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, whenever they are hard-bestead, sit down and compose "the following verses"? Well, 'tis my case precisely. I expected to have sent you the first half of my hexameters this morning, but Rowse came out last evening and knocked that plan on the head. He found me a fifteen-inch bore, for I was full of my heroics and would read 'em to him, though he is as innocent of Latin as a Methodist class-leader. However, he charitably spent the night, and forgot his wrongs in whiskey-toddy. So the epic must wait, which I am sorry for. If left too long, 'twill be flat as an oyster out of season. As I was lying in bed this morning musing over this, the ditty I en-

* To the *Nation*.

close literally *ist mir eingefallen*, to use the happy German phrase—dropped into me from the Lord knows where. The first stanza came into my head complete, as Minerva came out of, etc. *This*, thought I, is inspiration! So, as I took my bath, I hummed it over, and, breakfast done, wrote it out for you, and here it is. Now that it's warm it seems to me not bad. How it will smack in the cold-mutton next-day of print I can't say, but *I* rather like cold mutton. I think it had better not have my name, but go to the general credit of your "able staff." But you may do as you like about that. *I*, for one, don't fancy this onomatopœia style of publishing, which makes more of names than things. You don't encourage me about the macaronics. Will they do? Be frank. I am perfectly reasonable and can use them otherwise. I suppose I am to thank *you* for the article on Insurance, which tickled me thoroughly. So farewell, and you sha'n't hear from me again for a twelvemonth.

Cordially yours,

J. R. L.

TO E. C. STEDMAN

Elmwood, Feb. 12, 1866.

My dear Sir,—I think one of the greatest pleasures is to come across a poem that one can honestly like; it's like finding a new flower. If, at the same time, one can please the author by telling him so, all the better. I liked "Alice of Monmouth," and felt bound to say so. I am glad to find that what I said did not mislike you—for I believe I have earned in some quarters a somewhat

cynical reputation, because I have always insisted on reducing our criticism to a specie standard. If I don't like a thing and there's otherwise no harm in it, I hold my tongue. It's so hard to say anything that will not seem cold to a young author or a young mother! Does not the latter (for I will avoid kittle ice) think she has (*know* she has) brought into the world a new wonder for beauty, genius, goodness? Is not all about it miraculous? However, *your* baby is now some three years old; and, since you ask me, I will answer frankly that I did not like Alektryôn, and don't think him at all to be compared to his sister Alice—a strutting fellow that wants to make me believe he can crow in ancient Greek. Alice is Christian, modern, American, and that's why I like her. I don't believe in these modern antiques—no, not in Landor, not in Swinburne, not in any of 'em. They are all wrong. It's like writing Latin verses—the material you work in is dead. It's the difference between Chaucer and Gower. You see what I mean—or, at any rate, that I have a meaning, which is the main thing. It is like these everlasting Venuses our sculptors give us. They thrust the right foot forth a little and call it a "Greek Slave"; the left, and lo, a "White Captive"! Well, well, I won't bore you with a sermon; but you asked me, and so I answered. If I did not think you had better things in you I should have evaded with a civil bow.

And now for business. I have no doubt, from the hints you give me of your purpose, that I shall like your paper for the *North American Review*. The one you sent me in print I liked. We do not ask that our

contributors should always agree with *us*—except in politics; of course *there* the *Review* must be consistent. But otherwise—anybody who *has ideas* is thrice welcome. The April number is already full, but the sooner you send it the better.

I shall be in New York next week if nothing happens, and shall hope to see you there. If ever you come this way, I shall count on your coming out to my Doubting Castle here among the elms.

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO LESLIE STEPHEN

Elmwood, April 10, 1866.

My dear Stephen,—I am not very good at writing letters at any rate, and this is the first one I have sent across the Atlantic since our war began. That is now five years ago, but so crowded with events that it seems hardly yesterday that Sumter was fired on. Montaigne, and Byron after him (and both of 'em after Plutarch, if I remember), are all wrong in saying that life is long in proportion to its eventfulness or the movement of thought it has forced upon us. On the contrary, I am persuaded that periods of revolution and excitement cheat us of half our days; and that a pioneer backwoodsman, who knows no changes of ministry but those of the seasons, and whose greatest events are the coming into office and falling of the leaves, is the only mortal who knows what length of years is. It seems to me as if it were only a day or two since I parted with you at the corner of the lane, since we

walked together to Beaver Brook, since I told you, as we came down the hill on our way home, that I had no gift of prophecy, but that I had an *instinct* that the American people would come out of the war stronger than ever. I confess I have had an almost invincible repugnance to writing again to England. I share with the great body of my countrymen in a bitterness (half resentment and half regret) which I cannot yet get over. I do not mean that, if my heart could be taken out after death, *Delenda est Anglia* would be found written on it—for I know what the land we sprung from, and which we have not disgraced, is worth to freedom and civilization; but I cannot forget the insult so readily as I might the injury of the last five years. But I love my English friends none the less—nay, perhaps the more, because they have been *her* friends, too, who is dearer to me for her trials and for the victory which I am sure she will be great enough to use gently. There! like a true New-Englander I have cleared my conscience, and I can allow a little play to my nature.

First of all, for it is first in my thoughts, I am glad to hear that you are coming again. Mrs. Lowell and I have always remembered you with an affectionate interest, and shall feel wronged if you do not come to us directly on your arrival and aim at us when you start. That is, you must take passage for Boston (which saves you five guineas), and then come directly hither without going to a hotel, where the charges are now worse than ever. . . .

I was interested in what you told me of the pro-

fessorship.* I have heard very little about it, having abstained from English newspapers for these five years as strictly as a Pythagorean from beans. They need not be frightened, so far as we are concerned. We do not want to make Socinians of 'em, poor fellows! Their sow shall farrow in spite of the Black Douglas. What amused me most was the suggestion that we should have sent Mr. Bancroft, of all men in the world! Wouldn't you smile if I were to write you seriously that I hoped the English Government would not send out Roebuck as minister at Washington? Country parsons know as little about the other world as about this—and one really sees no means they have of knowing even so much. I should pity their parishes if they were not made up of "Britishers," as you persist in thinking that we call you. But, seriously, I doubt if the lectureship would have done much good. England *can't* like America, do what she or we will, and I doubt if I could, were I an Englishman. But I think the usages of society should hold between nations, and see no particular use in her taking every opportunity to *tell* us how disagreeable and vulgar we are. What *riled* me was the quiet assumption that we hadn't, couldn't, and had no right to have, a country over here. They seem to forget that more than half the people of the North have roots, as I have, that run down more than two hundred years deep into this new-world soil—that we have not a thought nor a hope that is not American—and they may make up

* A professorship — lectureship, rather — which Mr. Yates Thompson proposed to found at Cambridge for American lectures. It was, I think, declined by the Senate.—L. S.

their minds that it is not what Mr. Disraeli calls a "territorial democracy," but democracy itself, that makes us strong. If they could only understand that we feel like an *old* country over here, and not a sutler's camp, they would be less afraid of any active propagandism of ours. We would not rob you of a single one of your valuable institutions—state-church, peerage, pauperage —so long as you like 'em and like to pay for 'em. We really have no use for such things, and you can leave your doors unlocked, so far as we are concerned. *I* don't understand your English taste for what you call "respectability" (I should call it "whitechokerism"), thinking, as I do, that the one thing worth striving for in this world is a state founded on pure manhood, where everybody has a chance given him to better himself, and where the less costume and the more reality there is, the better. As for "Socinianism," heavens! we've got several centuries ahead of *that*, some of us, or behind it, if you please. Why couldn't they have said "Semi-Pelagianism"? There is a plesiosaurian word long enough to scare one a little! If you should infect 'em with that, 'twould be worse than the rinderpest. But, alas, there doesn't seem to be such a thing as an *esel*pest! *That* kind of animal seems to have a prodigious constitution. How they do survive everything, wagging their sacred ears in the pulpit, sticking their pens behind 'em in the Foreign Office (they're very convenient for that—I mean the ears), and never hearing anything through 'em on the Bench or in Parliament! Sacred animal, as safe from ideas as the laurel from lightning!

We have one of the breed, I fear, just now for Presi-

dent, with all the obstinacy of a weak mind and a strong constitution. But I think the people will hold out longer than he, and show how much stronger an united purpose is than a selfish one. Johnson is really foolish enough to think that he can make himself President for a second term by uniting in his favor the loyalty of both ends of the country. As if the Southern people, whose notion of the chase is to hunt loyalists the moment our troops are withdrawn (you know their passion for field-sports was one of the grounds of sympathy which was discovered between you and them), would ever forgive *him*. But I have the same confidence as ever (impudent Yankee that I am) in the sense and nerve of the people; and as they put down the same combination in the field, so they will at the polls, so soon as they understand what it means. Meanwhile we are gaining time—a great thing; the Southerners are learning again to be interested in *national* politics—a still greater thing; and matters are settling in a natural way, as they should and must at last by the necessities of trade and agriculture. Mr. Hosea Biglow addresses his constituents on this matter in the *May* number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, and I should like you to read his speech (especially as it is to be his last), if the magazine is to be come at in any London reading-room. I would not have you spend a shilling for it, nor will I send it, for fear it should cost you its weight in gold, after I had paid the postage; for the wonders of our international postal system are past my finding out.

We are having an April whimsical beyond the womanly privilege of April. Last Thursday my thermome-

ter marked 76° of Fahrenheit in the shade, and on Sunday morning there were three inches of snow on the ground. But the grass is beginning to green, the lilac buds are swelling, and I can hear the chirping of a brood of chickens in the cellar as I write. What a blessing is the quiet indifference of nature amid all our hurry and worry and turmoil! But for that it seems to me as if I could never have endured the last five years. However, we are all tougher than we think, and have also our kind of dogged persistency in living. Our constitutions adapt themselves to the slow poison of the world till we become mithridatized at last.

Now remember that your first dinner in America is to be eaten with me, and I only hope you won't arrive on one of those days of household dyspepsia—washing or ironing day. But, after all, the real flavor of a dinner is the welcome, and yours will be hearty. You shall have a new brier-wood pipe—though I am sorry to say that the war has somehow got into the tobacco—and I have some excellent materials for the making of night-caps, in which there shall be acres of pleasant dreams without a single toadstool of headache (and how full-grown they do get sometimes in a night!) in their whole expansion.

I am desired by the American Eagle (who is a familiar of mine caught on the coins of my country) to request you to present her compliments to the British Lion, and say to him that she does *not* (as he seems to think) spend *all* her time in trying to find a chance to pick out his eyes, having vastly more important things to occupy her mind about. She really can't conceive

how they can quarrel when *his* place is on the ground and *hers* in the air—a moral on which she begs him to meditate. *She* doesn't wish to change, having a natural fondness for large views. "As for Fenians," she adds, "tell him to spell it Fainéants, as we do over here, and he will enjoy his dinner again."

Isn't it lucky that I don't write often? Like a woman, I put the main thing in my P.S., which is, that I am, with the kindliest recollections,

Very truly your friend,

J. R. Lowell.

TO E. C. STEDMAN

Elmwood, May 15, 1866.

My dear Sir,—Pray forgive me a neglect which was hardly my fault. Your article was brought to me with several other matters from the post while I was in the midst of a business which must be done with before a fixed day. They were all laid upon my desk, got shuffled up with an already frightful heap, and when I had done my work I forgot all about them—not knowing that your paper was among them. Your note gave me a shiver. I hunted over my papers, found the article, read it, liked it, and shall print it with great pleasure. I agree with your general view and with most of the individual criticisms so far as I know anything about the writers. I found some names I had never heard of before—which told me I was growing old—for I used to keep pretty well *au courant*. I shall take the liberty to make a verbal change here and there, such as I am sure you would agree to could we talk the matter over.

I think, for example, you speak rather too well of young Lytton, whom I regard both as an impostor and an antinomian heretic. Swinburne I must modify a little, as you will see, to make the *Review* consistent with itself. But you need not be afraid of not knowing your own child again.

How comes on the "Theocritus"? I feel greatly interested in your success. I know of no English translation that is good for anything—indeed, I have only a faint recollection that I ever saw one. I *seem* to remember (as we Yankees say) a version of Elizabeth's time from which I have somewhere read extracts. The work appears to me not only a thing eminently fit to be done, but one by which solid reputation may be made. It is a rare opportunity, and particularly suited to a treatment in English hexameters. Pray don't neglect it, and don't hurry it. As one who has a sincere interest in you, will you pardon my saying that I fear you *improvise* a little too much? I have a fancy that long brooding is the only thing that will assure us whether our eggs are chalk or have a winged life hidden in them. I know very well the exigencies of authorship—*haud inexpertus loquor*—and that's the reason I hold up a warning finger.

I see you have been writing a naughty poem called "Anonyma." The poem itself I have not seen. I own I am a little afraid of the *demi-monde*, for 'tis the side where the devil always has us at an advantage. One thing I especially liked in your "Alice" was its *tendency*. Don't direct your next letter to the Rev. Mr. L. You see a main part of my duty for some years past

has been preaching to ingenuous youth, and I fall naturally into it.

With kind remembrances from Mrs. Lowell and myself to you and Mrs. Stedman,

I remain very truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, July 10, 1866.

. . . The older I grow the more I am convinced that [there] are no satisfactions so deep and so permanent as our sympathies with outward nature. I have not said just what I meant, for we are thrilled even more by any spectacle of human heroism. But the others seem to bind our lives together by a more visible and unbroken chain of purifying and softening emotion. In this way the flowering of the buttercups is always a great and I may truly say religious event in my year. But I am talking too unguardedly. You know what a deep distrust I have of the poetical temperament, with its self-deceptions, its real unrealities, and its power of sometimes unblest magic, building its New Jerusalems in a sunset cloud rather than in the world of actuality and man. . . .

I have been reading lately as vastly as usual and am now half through Julian Schmidt's history of French literature since '89. His history of modern German literature is the best I know. The one I am reading is good also. He is a very masculine critic, of the Lessing school, but with the "modern improvements"—not so original, but drawing his resources from a wider surface.

I have also been making my way into Lucretius somewhat. I don't quite *taste* him yet, but I see clearly that he beats all the Latin poets in poetic beauty of phrase. There is obscurely in him an almost Wordsworthian love of nature. And that reminds me that I have been reading again the "Prelude" and the "Excursion" with gushes of intense satisfaction. His poetry is like the country he lived in. It's hard work getting to the fine points of view — but, once there, what is there like it for breadth of view and a certain more ethereal atmosphere that clarifies our senses, as it were, and through them our minds? His poetry reminds one of the old baronial housekeeping. What splendor and what sordidness in one! . . .

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Elmwood, Sept. 14, 1866.

My dear Longfellow,—I should be very glad to come down and dine with you at Nahant and especially to meet Agassiz, but I am so full of work just now that I can fix no day. If I find I can before you come up, I will. I am as usual keeping abreast of a steam power-press, which has the advantage over brain power that it does not get tired and that you have [only] to open a valve and it goes of itself—which I find is not the case with the brain, though some writers seem to act as if it were.

I have been writing an introduction to the new "Biglow" series, on Yankeeisms and the like, which grew under my hands till it will make some sixty pages of print, and now I am at work on Mr. Johnson and his policy. Oh, these pot-boilers!

I thank you heartily for the kind things (just like you!) you said to Mrs. Hawthorne about Hawthorne's Life. Of course, I should like to do it very much. Whether I can, is another question. I have never tried my hand at any such thing, and it will take moreover so much time. There are seventeen quartos of "Diary" —a splendid mine, to be sure, but consider the amount of digging. And Mrs. H. tells me there are few letters. If you could ever find time to jot down some of your recollections and also the names of anybody you can think of likely to know anything, it would be a great kindness.

What an anti-Johnson lecturer we have in Johnson! Sumner has been right about the *cuss* from the first, and I was wrong.

Give kisses to all the children for me and bid them not forget me. That little procession with the books to bid you good-night is one of the sweetest pictures in my gallery.

Always yours,

J. R. L.

TO E. L. GODKIN

Elmwood, Sept. 25, 1866.

My dear Godkin,—I have had you on my conscience these six months, but your paper is so good that I am afraid to write for it lest I excite unsavory comparisons to my own detriment. I like it altogether. . . . Every Friday morning when the *Nation* comes, I fill my pipe and read it from beginning to end. Do you do it all yourself? Or are there really so many clever men in the country?

I couldn't answer your note offhand, for I was very busy with a hundred pages of proofs to read, but to-day I sat down and did what I could to answer ("fill," I think, is the proper word) your order. I fear I have not in stock enough of the kind of goods you want. The truth is, I feel it more every day that I belong to an older generation than you young fellows. I have not the journalist's knack of *shunting* my mind off upon another course at a moment's warning. My track is a single one, I fear, and has too few turn-outs in it. I shall have to subside ere long into the "heavy-father" parts. My very style belongs to the last century, and drops too readily into the sententious and elaborately historical manner. You want Spencer rifles, and I send you a train of siege guns spiked for action. Believe me, I was lively once, and may recover it; but I fear me much I have suffered a professor change that has gone too deep for healing. I am perfectly conscious of it and cannot yet help it. But I am at work on myself. Fancy a fellow whose latest reading is Wordsworth's prefaces and such things (by the latest I mean most modern), and who never sees any newspaper but the *Daily Advertiser*, undertaking to compete with you youngsters, supple with the daily gymnastics of *Saturday Reviews*, *Pall Mall Gazettes* (do they still exist, or am I pleiocene even in this?), and such like marvels of modern intellect! I am conscious of the absurdity, that's one comfort.

I send you my article, full of these emotions (the "full" means *me*, and the sentence should be turned end for end, but that is just my clumsiness); cut up, cut down, cut out, cut in, turn upside-down or end-wise, trans-

pose, dispose, burn if you like, and I shall feel that I have deserved it all. 'Tis not my line. Charles keeps me writing political articles for the *North American Review*, and vows he likes 'em, and I see they're full of faults as Andrew Johnson is of vulgarity. I had some rhymes in my head one day about a man with a "policy," which had a hopeful air about 'em, but I lost 'em clean out of my memory while I was hearing my classes mistranslate Italian and mispronounce Spanish.

Nevertheless, try me again. I may do better. Nobody knows what's in him till it is knocked out by his running against some granite post of necessity. I don't believe even birds sing when they get their fill of worms. If they are fasting, they try to drown the clamor of their poor little stomachs by those pipings which foolish people are always holding up as an example to poets. We follow it a little too faithfully, I admit, and are apt to sing the same song over and over again till the public gets tired of us. But what then? We are called on for so much new milk every day, and is not the cow with the iron tail sent by a good Providence for *us* also? Spare the water in your whiskey toddy and be generous with it in your articles, is the law of nature for the periodical writer.

Of course, if you print my article, let it be anonymous. . . .

Cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Sept. 25, 1866.

. . . I am tired to-night, having to-day corrected the

proofs of twenty-eight pages of *North American Review* politics and seventy of my Introduction to the new "Biglows"—for to such outrageous length has the latter spun itself out, with only a single lead between the lines. I don't think (to be candid) that either of 'em amounts to much except in pages. . . .

. . . I have another calf—I don't mean to my leg, but a bossy. Also I have sold this week $42 worth of pig—an old sow and three little piggieninnies. Also I have begun faintly to sue a man for my marsh-grass of last year. As he is an Irishman, I suppose he will set my barn afire. Crops are good, except melons, for which it has been too cold. Pears we have had plenty and good. You feel as if you had done something when you offer anybody fruit from a tree you planted twenty years ago. I wish I could feel so of my intellectual plantations. I have amused myself by stuffing the pockets of the printer's devil with Bartletts and watching the expansive effect on his pale-yellow face. He looks at me now when he meets me as if I were a man and—a great-uncle we'll say. I hope they won't give him the cholera, which has killed, I hear, nine people in the Port. And let me tell you something worth telling. Dr. Wyman's brother Rufus heard on his way out of town that three people had been left uncared for in a house. He jumped off the car, found them, and tended them till they died. I shall think better of the eight-hour movement so long as I live.* Isn't it good? As good, I think, as going to the war. . . .

* Mr. Wyman was an advocate of the movement.

TO E. L. GODKIN

Elmwood, Oct. 19, 1866.

. . . I send you a paragraph, which you may insert if you like among your skirmishers. Or make one yourself on the same topic, which deserves some sort of notice. . . .

I was glad to see some of your correspondents after Mr. Moon. He did well enough for Alford, who knew even less than himself; but, after all, he was never anything but green cheese, in whom conceit is naturally breeding maggots. I have not seen his article in the *Round Table*, but the notion of his undertaking to joust with a doughty old champion like Marsh * is very amusing. Mr. Marsh's articles are admirably solid. His style is his weak point. It is apt to be what I should call "congregational." But he is much better than usual in the *Nation* thus far. As an editor, I should find fault with his articles as being too palpably parts of a book. He does not get under way quite rapidly enough for a newspaper. But all he says is worth reading for its matter. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, Oct. 19, 1866.

. . . I have been working hard, and if my liver will let me alone, as it does now, am likely to go on all winter. And on *what* do you suppose? I have taken up one of the unfinished tales of the "Nooning," and it grew to a poem of near seven hundred lines! It is

* The late Hon. George P. Marsh.

mainly descriptive. First, a sketch of the narrator, then his "prelude," then his "tale." I describe an old inn and its landlord, bar-room, etc. It is very homely, but right from nature. I have lent it to Child and hope he will like it, for if he doesn't I shall feel discouraged. It was very interesting to take up a thread dropt so long ago, and curious as a phenomenon of memory to find how continuous it had remained in my mind, and how I could go on as if I had let it fall only yesterday. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Oct. 22, 1866.

. . . I have not seen the "Life of Percival," but, oddly enough, my fairy-tale (as you will see) turns on the weakness of the poetical temperament. You know what a contempt I have for it—mixed with pity. It *must* be over-sensitive, or it could not feel all those unnoticed nothings which it is its business to record for other people; and this sensitiveness, making it more or less solitary, makes it also as a necessary consequence egotistic. I saw Percival once—sat nearly opposite him at table in Madison, Wisconsin—a shabby-looking little man (dirty-looking, I had almost said), with a goodish head, but no way remarkable. I did not speak with him. He had a singular talent for languages, I was told, and I think some one showed me some verses of his in German. The *Advertiser* this morning compares him with Goethe, God save the mark! Two men *more* unlike could hardly be found. The Herr Geheimerath had something of that Ben Franklin quality in him which

one recognizes also in Shakespeare. In such natures the imagination seems to spire up like a Gothic cathedral over a prodigiously solid crypt of common-sense, so that its lightness stands secure on the consciousness of an immovable basis, and is logically knit up with it. This heavy understanding is the foundation of great characters, it seems to me. It is like prudence—a beggarly quality in itself, but without it all other finer ones are good for little. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Oct. 25, 1866.

. . . My dear boy, I have in my pocket $820 for my last six weeks' work, and mean for the first time in my life to make an investment of money earned! . . .

I sent for the "Life of Percival," and found it dullish. But perhaps I needed some more pungent food in my rather dragged-out condition. It is execrably done, to be sure. But there is not a gleam of genius in the book, and the specifications of his metrification (after his petrification) are incredibly bad. His mode of life latterly was curious—but much as that of a musquash would be. A bachelor may do anything. There is no ballast like a wife and children. His linguistic tastes interested me, but do not astonish me so much as they do his biographer, for whoever has been bitten by that gadfly knows that there is scarce a monomania so utterly absorbing. I call it a monomania when one cannot give himself wholly to it. Perhaps I am bitter. But I was disappointed, for I thought Percival *had* some genius. As it is, he strikes me rather as one of the men who

talk about high aims rather than have them. This is better than nothing, I grant, for it proves one conscious that there are such things. But I think that a man who really has them—well, he won't see his shaft quiver in the shield of the sun, maybe, but he will make a long shot for all that. In character, Percival seems to have been a Coleridge who had some pride of independence, a Coleridge with scruples. . . .

What first disgusted me with him was the pretended attempt at suicide. If he had been in earnest, he would never have made himself visible in the orchard in time to be antidoted with coffee. It gives a flavor of insincerity to all the rest that follows. I suppose scarce a young man of sensibility ever grew his shell who didn't, during the process, meditate suicide a great many times. I remember in '39 putting a cocked pistol to my forehead—and being afraid to pull the trigger, of which I was heartily ashamed, and am still whenever I think of it. Had I been in earnest, why, of course, you would never have had the incomparable advantage of my friendship. But, of course, I was only flattering myself. I am glad now that I was too healthy, for it is only your feeble Jerusalems that fairly carry the thing out and rid the world of what would have been mere nuisances.

We have been having lately the most marvellous moon-clarities (*there* the French lingo beats us) that ever were seen, and my conservative English elms, who stick to their old June fashions in spite of frost, are enough to take your breath away. If I could make a verse that would move people as they do *me*, I should be sure I was a poet. But unhappily I have discourse of reason. . . .

TO E. C. STEDMAN

Elmwood, Nov. 26, 1866.

My dear Sir,—I thank you heartily for your remembrance and for the copy of your clever satire,* which I had not seen. It is full of good hits and it is a pity that you had not gone on, for *crescit eundo* is specially true of liveliness (where there is any), and it takes a little time for the mind to get limber. I am truly glad that you like the new "Biglow Papers," and am obliged to you for saying so. I have not seen any notices of them, and care very little for such things. Indeed, I avoid seeing them so far as I can. I have sometimes wished that I cared more for the public than I do, but it is hard to change a habit of near thirty years; but I *do* like to be liked by my friends, and I hope always to reckon you among them. I still keep warm in my heart the pleasure which your cordial reception gave me last winter in New York. I suppose this series wants something of the first-jump (as Montaigne calls it) gayety and good spirits of the earlier ones, but I think there is better stuff in it for all that. If I am less of an improvisator, I hope I am getting to be more of an artist, though I miss the crowd of eager fancies that used to haunt me night and day. Invention is the faculty which ages first, and the material to work in is scanted, while the skill to shape it grows.

I am trying to grow young again by a dip in the past. I have been overhauling my old manuscripts, and hope

* "A Reconstruction Letter."

to finish some beginnings which have stood still ever since I was benumbed by sitting down in a professor's chair. One of these will appear in the January *Atlantic*, and I wish you to like it. The best parts of it have been lying in my desk these fifteen years. This would have more than satisfied Horace! As for me, I do not find that anything ripens in manuscript like pears in a drawer, for I cannot reform what I have once written. To carry a thing long in the mind is my recipe. It settles and clarifies, and you have only to tap it and draw it off the lees. I fancy this is what Horace meant after all.

I have not seen Swinburne's new volume—but a poem or two from it which I have seen shocked me, and I am not squeamish. . . . I am too old to have a painted *hetaira* palmed off on me for a Muse, and I hold unchastity of mind to be worse than that of body. Why should a man by choice go down to live in his cellar, instead of mounting to those fair upper chambers which look towards the sunrise of that Easter which shall greet the resurrection of the soul from the body of this death? *Virginibus puerisque?* To be sure! let no man write a line that he would not have his daughter read. When a man begins to lust after the Muse instead of loving her, he may be sure that it is never the Muse that he embraces. But I have outlived many heresies, and shall outlive this new Adamite one of Swinburne. The true Church of poetry is founded on a rock, and I have no fear that these smutchy back-doors of hell shall prevail against her. . . .

I wish you and Mrs. Stedman would make us a little

visit. Why not come at Christmas and warm yourselves by our Yule-log? We have a real one still—a good, old-fashioned fire of our own wood. Don't neglect Theocritus. It is an excellent thing to do, and to be done in hexameters. Mrs. Lowell joins me in cordial remembrance to you both, and I remain

Always truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Elmwood, Feb. 27, 1867.

My dear Longfellow,—On looking back, I find that our personal intercourse is now of near thirty years' date. It began on your part, in a note acknowledging my "Class-poem" much more kindly than it deserved. Since then it has ripened into friendship, and there has never been a jar between us. If there had been, it would certainly have been my fault and not yours. Friendship is called the wine of life, and there certainly is a stimulus in it that warms and inspires as we grow older. Ours should have some body to have kept so long.

I planned you a little surprise in the *Advertiser* for your birthday breakfast. I hope my nosegay did not spoil the flavor of your coffee. It is a hard thing to make one that will wholly please, for some flowers will not bear to be handled without wilting, and the kind I have tried to make a pretty bunch of is of that variety. But let me hope the best from your kindness, if not from their color or perfume.

In case they should please you (and because there

was one misprint in the *Advertiser*, and two phrases which I have now made more to my mind), I have copied them that you might have them in my own handwriting.

In print, you see, I have omitted the tell-tale ciphers —not that there was anything to regret in them, for we have a proverbial phrase, "like sixty," which implies not only unabated but extraordinary vigor.

Wishing you as many happy returns as a wise man should desire, I remain always

Affectionately yours,

J. R. L.

TO T. W. HIGGINSON

Elmwood, March 28, 1867.

My dear Higginson, — Your criticism * is perfectly just, and I am much obliged to you for it—though I might defend myself, I believe, by some constructions even looser in some of the Greek choruses. But, on the whole, where I have my choice I prefer to make sense. The fact is that the "Ode" was written at a heat—such a one, indeed, as leaves one colder than common afterwards—and I have hardly looked at it since. There is a horrible truth in the *litera scripta manet*, and

* The criticism was, apparently, on the construction of the verses in stanza v., which still stand in the poem as follows:

> "Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
> Light the black lips of cannon, and the sword
> Dreams in its easeful sheath."

The "Commemoration Ode" was about to be reprinted in the *Harvard Memorial Biographies*, edited by Colonel Higginson.

the confounded things make mouths at us when we try to alter, but I think *this* may do:

> "Ere yet the sharp, decisive word
> Redden the cannon's lips, and while the sword."

On looking farther, I find to my intense disgust a verse without a mate in the last stanza but one, and I must put in a patch. If I had only kept my manuscript! We must read,

> "And bid her navies, that so lately hurled
> Their crashing battle, hold their thunders in,"

or else the poor "world" just below will have no law of gravitation to hold itself up by. I know I had something better originally, but I can't get it back.*

Item, in the eighth please make this change:

> "Virtue treads paths that end not in the grave,
> But through those constellations go
> That shed celestial influence on the brave.
> If life were but to draw this dusty breath
> That doth our wits enslave,
> And with the crowd to hurry to and fro,
> Seeking we know not what, and finding death,
> These did unwisely; but if living be,
> As some are born to know,
> The power to ennoble, and inspire

* None of the corrections and additions suggested in this letter were made in the "Ode" as printed in the *Memorial Biographies*. "Apparently I begged off from them," Colonel Higginson writes, "or perhaps they were just too late. Some years afterwards Lowell wrote me a letter (now lost) saying that he had kept no copy, and wished to use them. Apparently they could not then be found. One of the emendations [the one to which this is a note] he seems to have remembered and used."

In other souls our brave desire
For fruit, not leaves, of Time's immortal tree,
These truly live, our thought's essential fire,
And to the saner," etc.

There! I won't open the book again, or I shall write you another ode instead of mending this. But in this latter passage the metre wanted limbering a little—it was *built* too much with blank-verse bricks—and I think I have bettered it, at least to the ear.

Pray give my kind regards to Mrs. Higginson, and tell her I am glad she can find spring *any*where this year, though she has to go to the "Biglow Papers" for it. I wrote those verses (nearly all of them) quite twenty years ago, and am pleased to think the colors are so fast. But beg her not to wash them too hard or they may *run*. I think (though in the midst of them I laugh at "the catalogue style") they—the verses—are a little too preraphaelitish, too much like a bill of particulars. Tempted by her applause, I have just read them over, and this is what comes of it in one who has to write criticisms every quarter. If I live this life much longer, I shall do nothing but profess and review.

If your new edition is to be printed here, will you order proofs sent me? I wish it could be said somewhere that the "Ode" is reprinted "by request," or something of the kind. I told Child so before, but he said no. It strikes me in the same way now. It looks as if *I* had thrust it in there, a thought that makes me red. Why not at the head of it, after the title—"(re-

printed by permission)"? I don't wish to give it too much importance, but it worries me.

I hope my house may seem nearer the next time you are in Cambridge. I remain

Very truly yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Tuesday.

My dear Higginson,—Any change in what the ear has grown wonted to is at first unpleasing; but you shall do as you like with *your* copy of the "Ode," and of mine *farò altro governo* if, when I reprint it in a volume, I am as discontent with that passage as now. But print yours as it is and I shall be satisfied.

Yours very truly,

J. R. Lowell.

TO E. L. GODKIN

Elmwood, Friday, 1867.

My dear Godkin,—I send back the proof, which seems flat enough now, as they all do, confound 'em! The lively pop of the cork has so much power over the imagination at first! I have not changed it except in striking out some of the weakest verses. The truth is one *can't*. They are like balloons that have snapped the cord. We can gaze wistfully after, but cannot overtake them.

The *Nation* is my weekly refreshment. It is, in my judgment, really *excellent* — so full of good-manners, good-sense, and good-writing; and our journals are com-

monly crammed with crudeness, common-place, and cussedness! τρια καππα κακιστα (put on the accents yourself—I throw you in the Greek).

I laughed heartily (remembering your honest laugh at Shady Hill) over your comments on Child's (I suppose) letter anent Alford. 'Tis the curse of an editor that he must always be right. Ah, when I'm once out of the *North American Review*, won't I kick up my heels and be as ignorant as I please! But beware of omniscience. There is death in *that* pot, however it be with others. It excites jealousy, to begin with.

Come on soon again.

Ever yours truly,

J. R. Lowell.

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, June 5, 1867.

. . . This morning Lafarge came to see me, and wants to illustrate some of my poems. I was pleased and told him so, and read him two or three he had never seen. He seemed to like them. If he did not, he owes it to your mother, for without her copies I had been harmless. How perennially green we poets are! Pine-trees are nothing to us, and they make little poems too, that's what keeps *them* so. I like Lafarge (are there two f's in his name?) very much. He really thinks, and has ideas—a very uncommon man.

As for myself, I am turned contractor of hammock-netting for the orioles, taking my pay in notes. I throw strings out of window and they snap them up at once. They sit in the cherry-tree hard by and warble "Hurry

up! hurry up!" I never found out before just what they said. But if you listen you will find that this is what they first say. A vulgarism, I admit, but native. They are rather imperious with me. We are having just such a spring as I love and as justifies my description in the "Biglow Papers," first coy and then—what grass! My mind (or whatever it is: I leave that to you who bother yourselves with metaphysics) turns graminivorous and ruminant. I am promoted to be a cow. I wallow in it and know how sweet it tastes. I shall give milk one of these days. There never was such a season, if one only did not have to lecture and write articles. There never *is* such a season, and that shows what a poet God is. He says the same thing over to us so often and always new. Here I've been reading the same poem for near half a century, and never had a notion what the buttercup in the third stanza meant before. But I won't tell. I'm going to have it all to myself. We are growing like debt. Jack himself would have thought well of my beans, and as for pease a cane won't answer to measure 'em with. Nothing but a lark can beat them. I wish I could be planted every year and come up so fresh. Well, we must comfort ourselves with St. Paul's rather one-legged simile, I suppose. But I shall be happy to rise again after I'm planted, as fresh and undiscouraged as a pea. . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, June 27, 1867.

My dear Charles,—It is raining fast from the northeast, and I have three tons of hay out. I cannot do

anything with the weather this summer. It has no more consideration for the natural feelings of a prophet than the war had for those of Mr. Seward. The latter, I see by the papers this morning, has been appealing at Hartford to posterity, leaving his fame, like Lord Bacon, to distant generations. It is a good precedent, and I follow it, leaving the year 1967 to pronounce whether, after all the rain we have had, I was not justified in putting my scythes into the crop, with entire faith that Aquarius had enough to do for some weeks in refilling his watering-pot. But the old fellow is bent on making up for his culpable laches in those two years of drought, when he left us to our pumps for moisture.

Of other crops I have not much to say. You must not expect much from the "Rousseau." I am always bothered when I try to do anything with old material. I never do anything good unless it keep me awake of nights, and Rousseau let me sleep to my heart's discontent. So there will probably be too many adjectives in the article. Not that I have ever quite reconciled myself to the modern bobtailed style either, which gives one the bare thought, like a naked new-born babe, without a rag of expletive to its back. However, thought is a very good thing when you can get it. . . .

We have had Moses and the Prophet here, as the papers have told you, and our people behaved just as I would have had them. I always thought the Republicans might have kept Johnson if they had applied to him half the soft sodder they are so profuse of to men not a whit wiser—like Thad Stevens, for example. Sumner invited me to dine with the Prophet, but I could

not make up my mind to go. —— says he looks like a little country attorney. If I had said as many hard things of him as —— has, I could not have broken bread with him. I am as willing as most men to allow credit for all a man's good, and I always have for Seward's; but I don't believe in this diplomatic style with a man who is doing public mischief, as if we were so many augurs (instead of bores) and there were no such thing as Earnest. I confess I *had* a curiosity—but not very teasing. . . .

TO J. T. FIELDS *

Elmwood, June 30, 1867.

My dear Fields,—The gods have made incision in me this morning, and cut out what Dante calls a tumor of the mind, which has been pressing on my brain for a while. Whether they have made me poetical or not I leave to Touchstone and you. Now, you may pitch it into the Atlantic forthwith, or, trusting to luck, save it for the "Almanac." † If it go into the latter, I should like to have it opposite the directions for the weather—"About this time expect a drought"; or else with this epigraph, "1st January, Don Pedro Calderon de la Barca, b. 1601." According to one of his Spanish biographers, divine Providence made a special effort on this occasion, and resolved to begin the century and the year with a thumping boy.

Don't you want me to make your astronomical calculations for you? I could get along very well with an

* Enclosing his poem, "The Nightingale in the Study."
† "The Atlantic Almanac," to be published in the autumn.

old sextant there is in the garret, and will engage for two moons a month if you want 'em, or for an occultation as often as Longfellow needs a subject. As for tides, every purchaser shall have a high one when he wishes to bathe. Whoever buys two copies shall have fair weather for his haying. How many sewing-machines and grand pianos do you offer as bribes? For a good Chickering, I will engage to take ten copies and read them all—though I must confess I don't generally find an almanac very good reading. Mind and have in all the old pictures of the signs, and the figure of the man (if our modesty will stand it) subject to all the skyey influences. Couldn't I do your anecdotes? Those are by far the best part of the "Old Farmer's," and that will be your chief rival. Be sure and let Father Time on your cover have a scythe and hour-glass twice as large as that catch-penny affair fits him out with—for yours will cut twice as wide a swath and take twice as long to read. Shall you have pictures? I'll engage to make you better ones than those in "Sir Launfal" or my fairy-tale for half the price.

You and Mrs. Fields must come down to hear Emerson at Phi Beta. I invite you to dine with the society, and am sorry I can't include Mrs. Fields. An element of picturesqueness would be cheering to us poor devils who have to make speeches.

I am in the midst of haying, with a splendid crop. Give my distant regards to the mountains and my kindest to Mrs. Fields, and believe me

Cordially yours,

J. R. L.

P. S.—Mr. Gurney (who likes me) has been dining with me, and I read him my verses (*before* dinner, on my honor), and he pronounced them "exquisite." What would you have more? It is as well known as any other fact in science that people always tell poets *just* what they think of their productions. You, my dear Fields, always give me a more favorable opinion than the stupid public. It shows your taste, and does you a vast deal of credit. I am going to write another as soon as I can. The possibility of doing this came to me like a flash as I was walking out of town last night after club. I happened to look up at the stars, and my mind was loosened like brooks in spring. I wrote down a few stanzas before I went to bed, so as to be sure of it, and this morning it slid like sand. Here I am, pleased with it, and in a week goodness knows how flat it will seem! But so we are made, and it's lucky we can think well of ourselves for a minute or two. If our conceit didn't make us take pride in the chalk eggs we brood so patiently, what would become of us? I expect, by return of mail, your affidavit that my poem is "delicious." On second thoughts, I believe that was Gurney's word. It beats "exquisite" hollow, and so I choose it. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, July 8, 1867.

My dear Charles,—The two unenclosed and imaginary sonnets on which you ask my judgment I find much better than those ordinary ones which grossly subject themselves to our senses. They are of the

kind that all poets long to write, and which we wish most poets had confined themselves to writing. I don't know which I like best. There is something very tender in the one "To ——"; but, on the whole, I prefer the other, "To O," which I suppose means annihilation. The thought is so admirably carried out by the expression that one has a feeling of nothingness all through. Perhaps this is not wholly original, for I think it has been attempted in many other sonnets, even in some of Petrarca's, and with good success, but I never knew utter vacancy so well expressed before. Of the merits of your translation I cannot so well judge till I have seen the originals. Even without that help I should conjecturally emend the one "To ——," thus:

> Dear is the mistress that hath never been,
> And sweet the music that lies ever hid
> In Fancy's might-be; grovelling all we did
> To that great act the inner eye had seen
> Give real being to life's painted scene;
> Priceless the book whereon we have not bid,
> The gift still hidden 'neath the box's lid,
> The action dormant in its germ serene.
> But what are these, or other shapes of dream,
> To poems never writ, that spare our friends,
> And *are* so sweet because they only *seem?*
> With these the witch Imagination blends
> Her dearest drugs; still unpossessed they gleam,
> And theirs the only charm that never ends.

Of the one "To O" the version you didn't send me is as exact as need be.

I cannot find anything in Digby's* book to your

* Sir Kenelm Digby's "Of Bodies and of Man's Soul."

purpose, though I am glad you set me on looking it through again, for I found much entertainment in it as well as solace. There are noble strains in it here and there, especially the address to his soul, at the end of the second treatise. There is something very delightful in books written by men who felt so deeply the importance of their own personality and mix so much of themselves in what they write. Literature was aristocratic then, and man's *ego* was safe from being jostled by the mob till it submitted to be lost therein.

Dante's system follows Thomas Aquinas pretty closely, and I can find what you want, I guess, in the notes to Philalethes' version of the "Divine Comedy." Let me know the precise point, and I will make an abstract of the notes for you. I have been shut up for these ten days by a scald on the leg, or I would have gone to the College Library. That is closed now till after Commencement. . . .

I have not felt in the mood to do much during my imprisonment. One little poem I have written—"The Nightingale in the Study." It is about Calderon, and I am inclined to think it pretty; but that kind of nonsense is always knocked out of me so soon that I may change my mind on reading it over. 'Tis a dialogue between my catbird and me—he calling me out of doors, I giving my better reasons for staying within. Of course my nightingale is Calderon. The plot, you see, is a natural one. I have been reading novels—"Jane Eyre," among the rest. It was very pleasant to me for its inexperience. It is a girl's dream of a world not yet known, or only glimpsed from afar. But there is real

power in it, and the descriptions of scenery are the best I know, out of Ruskin. I have read over "Roderick Random," too—an odd contrast—but did not learn anything new from it. I found I knew Smollett well enough before. However, I shall get "Peregrine Pickle" for the sake of Trunnion and Pipes, who are grown very dim to me. Fielding's coarseness belongs to his time, Smollett's is of all time. But there are good sketches in him. Then, of course, I have been reading State Trials, as I always do when cast away. There is more nature in them than in all the novels. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Elmwood, July 9, 1867.

. . . As for me, I am buried alive in the night. Every one else is long ago sleeping, and my only living company is that of a cricket who keeps up his monotonous serenade under my window. How shrill and loud he sounds in the stillness—so breathless I can hear my heart beating, for the sky is making up its mind to rain, and the winds have all gathered in their sky-caverns to plot together. He sings right Ossian—a song of the days that are gone. To the cheerfullest tune in the world he matches the saddest words.

"Sweet are the days while they last!
But autumn is coming,
Chilly and numbing;
Winter is coming too fast!"

I answer:

"Still there is fuel in plenty
That burns ever clearer.

I will but draw nearer
The same hearth that warmed me at twenty."

He insists:

"Yes, there'll be some failing flashes;
But winter creeps forward,
Life cants to the norward,
And soon there'll be nothing but ashes!"

He is a very melancholy cricket. I think he has been crossed in love, or had something that disagreed with him for supper, or written some verses that folks didn't like. It has just begun to rain on him, and I'm glad of it. I hope he'll get a thorough ducking, but all the waters in heaven can't wash the nonsense out of a poet, as he is. Already he is beginning to weave the rain into his verse.

"And the rain is too strong for the fire.
Poor sparks! it is autumn,
The chill drops have caught 'em,
And out fizzle hope and desire!"

And so you wrote to me just to find out if an "Ember-Picture" was mine? Daughter of Eve! Have you wagered a pair of gloves on it? You have lost, then. *Adsum qui feci, me, in me convertite ferrum!* That is, you turn me to iron of the hardest temper. You, who confess that you drove home a wagon-load of laurel, with ——— to sweeten it, can spare never a leaf of it for me? Your hillsides redden with it (blushing under their unmerited bays as poets often might), and you deny me a poor sprig? Well, you say "No!" very prettily and frankly, and that is some comfort. Perhaps it

is even refreshing to have written something you don't like.

> Save me, ye gods, from ever-prosperous lays!
> A dash of kindly censure seasons praise.
> Fed still with sweets, I lose my taste, I doubt;
> The drop of bitter brings the flavor out.

For all that, I think it rather a pretty picture, or, at any rate, the original in my fancy was. But what would you have? The Muses are women and give us the mitten sometimes. One can't always have what one would. Maybe you'll like my next better. Don't turn off your poor old trouvère because he flats now and then. I shall keep trying till I get the key, and when I do! Hate all my verses and like me. I shall be satisfied. . . .

TO C. E. NORTON

Elmwood, July 18, 1867.

. . . Emerson's oration* was more disjointed than usual, even with *him*. It began nowhere and ended everywhere, and yet, as always with that divine man, it left you feeling that something beautiful had passed that way — something more beautiful than anything else, like the rising and setting of stars. Every possible criticism might have been made on it but one—that it was not noble. There was a tone in it that awakened all elevating associations. He boggled, he lost his place, he had to put on his glasses; but it was as if a creature from some fairer world had lost his way in

* Before the Φ. B. K. Society.

our fogs, and it was *our* fault, not his. It was chaotic, but it was all such stuff as stars are made of, and you couldn't help feeling that, if you waited awhile, all that was nebulous would be whirled into planets, and would assume the mathematical gravity of system. All through it I felt something in me that cried "Ha, ha, to the sound of the trumpets!" . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Sept. 25, 1867.

. . . I also have read Littré's book, but was not so much taken with it as you were. It was a little *too* "positivist" for me. He gives more than their due to the Kelts, and less than their due to the Germans, it seems to me. As to the Romans, Fauriel is better. You have read him and will know what I mean. I was a little tired, too, with his repetitions. He reprinted his essays without digesting them, and says the same thing a dozen times over. You will smile, perhaps, but *I* brightened up when I came to his discussions of old French towards the end. *There* he is really somebody, and knows what he is talking about. But as for the Kelts, there is no early French literature of any value in which the Teutonic blood did not supply the *fond*. The history of the language proves it, if nothing else did. Mind, I don't mean that I don't like Littré, for I do thoroughly. But I like Man better than I do any special variety of man—and I think the Keltic variety one of the poorest.

The papers say I am to publish a volume of poems

this autumn, and I think I shall. But they seem so poor when I come to look them over! What can I do? They have all been printed, and I must stand up to my "record," as the politicians call it. At least I mean well in the dedication. So you must take them as my mother used to take the little nosegays I brought her from the fields—whiteweed and succory and blue-eyed grass, with here and there a less common mimosa intermixed—and yet with the one merit of being at least home-grown and native in the main.

I begin my annual dissatisfaction of lecturing next Wednesday. I cannot get used to it. All my nightmares are of lecturing. But still I grow stouter. . . .

TO JAMES B. THAYER

Elmwood, Sunday Evening, Oct., 1867.

. . . The review does not change my opinion of Mr. Longfellow's translation — not as the best possible, by any means, but as the best probable. The fault I should find with the criticism is one whereof the author seems to be conscious himself—at least in some measure. It is laid out on too large a scale. His portico is as much too large as that of our Boston Court-House. It seems rather an attempt to show how much the critic knows (and I am heartily glad to find an American who knows so much) than to demonstrate the defects of the translation. (N. B. My faith in him is a little shaken by what he says of Philalethes, whose notes are excellent, but his version Dutch to the last ditch. Blanc also is a very dull fellow. His "Vocabolario," barring some ety-

mological blunders, is valuable, though to a knower of Dante chiefly as an index, but his comment as void of insight as Bentley's on Milton.) Nobody who is intimate with the original will find any translation of the "Divine Comedy" more refreshing than *cobs*. Has not Dante himself told us that no poetry can be translated? But, after all is said, I think Mr. Longfellow's the best thus far, as being the most accurate. It is to be looked on, I think, as measured prose—like our version of Job, for example, though without that mastery of measure in which our Bible translators are unmatched except by Milton. I mean where they are at their best, as in Job, the songs of Deborah and Barak, the death of Sisera, and some parts of the Psalms. Mr. Longfellow is not a scholar in the German sense of the word—that is to say, he is no pedant; but he certainly *is* a scholar in another and perhaps a higher sense; I mean in range of acquirement and the flavor that comes of it. I agree with the critic that he should not have cited prose translations of Homer and Virgil; but I should not say with the critic that the Mantuan could be rendered in Scott's measures, nor, I am sure, would Dante have heard it said without indignation. Wordsworth's "Laodamia," with its reminiscences of the sixth book, comes nearer the Maronian march.

But I am heartily glad to find so enthusiastic a student of the poet *chi sovra gli altri come aquila vola*, and have to thank him for giving me the names of two books on Dante which I do not yet possess and with which I shall hasten to supply myself. What he says of the poet as an Italian is true and striking. Yet he

was a Ghibelline for all that—just as our Democrats are the firmest believers in the One Man power.

I remain

Very cordially yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO J. T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Oct. 31, 1867.

. . . What a loss we all have in Governor Andrew! So good a man is rare anywhere, so upright a politician especially rare. His jolly courage and good-humored firmness made a combination we shall not see again, I fear, in our day. And let them say what they would of the rhetoric of his speeches; you felt a heart beating all through them, which, after all, is better than all the rules in Blair and Whately. God comfort his wife! One of these days the memory of her husband will be her best consolation, as it is now her keenest grief. But where shall we find another unselfish public man? . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, Tuesday Night, 1868.

. . . The trouble with the "Flying Dutchman" is not in what I left out, but in what I couldn't get in. Let us be honest with each other, my dear Lorenzo de' Medici, if we can't be with anybody else. The conception of the verses is good; the verses are bad. I ought not to have taken your check, but I should not have been true to my guild else. As for putting back what was in the first copy—the said first copy went up my chimney Sunday afternoon, as airy and sparkling a poem

as I meant it to be when it came first into my head. If I *could* recover it with the fervor of the flame and the grace of the smoke still in it! That's the kind of thing we dream of—the copy you have is the kind of thing we *do*. The fact is, it did not begin itself right, and I was thenceforth the prisoner of the lilt to whose tune my brain had begun to—I won't say dance, but—march to the galleys. But there is a month yet. Let me forget it, and perhaps I can do it again better. If not, I have the germ of a little prose essay in my head, which I think will more than take its place if all goes well.

One third of the new volume is already in type! I can't make out whether the author is a poet (though he would like to be); but I have got so far as to think humbly that he is not altogether an ass, at any rate—which is reasonably consoling, as this world goes. I think, instead of a preface (which we agree about), I might put a note in brackets on the back of the dedicatory page, saying in a few words what I wish.

My heart was almost broken yesterday by seeing nailed to *my* willow a board with these words on it, "These trees for sale." The wretch is going to peddle them for firewood! If I had the money, I would buy the piece of ground they stand on to save them—the dear friends of a lifetime. They would be a loss to the town. But what can one do? They belong to a man who values them by the cord. I wish Fenn had sketched them at least. One of them I hope will stand a few years yet in my poem—but he might just as well have outlasted me and my works, making his own green ode every summer.

Well, this is a free country! Hurrah for Banks and Butler! . . .

TO THE SAME

Elmwood, March 5 (O. S., Feb. 22), 1868.

My dear Fields,—You know that there is a very considerable party in the world, headed by the Pope—that pagan full of pride—who would cure all our ills by simply putting the world back, and this feat they would accomplish by putting back the hands of the clock. When I got home last night and reflected on the indecency of which I had been guilty in not answering your note, I was struck with the simplicity of this plan, and especially with its adaptation to a difficulty like that in which I found myself. I at first thought of lengthening the pendulum of my clock and waiting patiently till it should have *lost time* enough to carry me back to where I wished to be. But, on mature reflection, I found a swifter solution of my problem. I remembered that the Russians, a highly respectable and friendly nation, still adhered to the Old Style in their computation of time, thus always having twelve more days in their pockets than those spendthrift people who had allowed themselves to be cheated by the Pope out of that precious advantage. By our purchase of Alaska, I think, we are entitled to share in this benefit of calendar. On this computation, I have not yet received, and shall not [receive] for a couple of days yet, the note you were so kind as to be going to write me day after to-morrow, 24th Feb., O. S. Provided I ever get it (for you may change your mind), I shall be very happy to come; but I will never

join in a conspiracy to cheat Longfellow out of near a fortnight of his days—a very serious matter at sixty-one. If you should be going to send me also some tickets for Dickens's readings of the 24th, 25th, 26th, and 28th Feb., as you kindly hint, I shall be extremely obliged to you. There can be no greater privilege than to hear a man of genius interpret his own creations. And a very delightful man of genius he is—simple, sweet, and natural—and so used to being a lion that he might lie down with Charles Lamb without scaring him. If Britannia could always have ruled her waves as quietly as he does, there would have been a kindlier feeling between us and her—I mean her and us, saving her presence.

I concluded a treaty with Mrs. Fields on Saturday, by the terms of which you are to come and eat roast pig with us so soon as the fitting time for the feast of those innocents shall arrive, which will be in about three weeks. I have a lovely brood, whose tails curl with eagerness for martyrdom, and who will be as tender as young missionaries. . . .

TO THE SAME

March, 1868.

Fragment of a Pindarique Ode in the manner of the late divine Mr. Abraham Cowley:

Come, oh, my Fields,
Leaving the city (with ill authors vext)
☞ *At half past two on Thursday next,*
Come, try what sweets the Country yields;
Come and eat Pigge!
For, such the swelling nature

Of that delicious creature,
That ere another week he'll be too bigge.
Come, and bring Her with you
By whose fair presence graced
An Irish Stew,
Nay, a meer emptie board, were an imperial feast.

Here I am interrupted—but you shall have the rest by instalments. But come on Thursday at ½ past 2, with Mrs. Fields.

Believe me ever yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO T. W. PARSONS

Elmwood, July 1, 1868.

My dear Parsons,—I seem ungrateful, but when your letter came I was grubbing away at an article for the *North American*, and forgot my answer, though not your friendship. Whether praise be agreeable or not depends, you know, on where it comes from, and yours is always precious to me. The first bay-leaf I ever got that I valued was the poem you wrote to me ever so long ago.

The poem of mine which you liked had at least so much right to it that it was the natural expression of a real feeling. Something more than half of it was written more than twenty years ago, on the death of our eldest daughter; but when I came to complete it that other death, which broke my life in two, *would* come in against my will, so that you were right in your surmise. I was very glad you liked it, and your letter touched me deeply, as you may well conceive.

I guess your sister is half right in her criticisms on my "Idyl"; but if we poor poets were tied down to saying only just what was necessary on a subject (so garrulous as reverie is apt to be), what would become of us? Tell her there is no absolute *necessity* for people writing accounts of days in the country—they don't affect the price of stocks—though when they are as lively as hers I don't wish them shorter.

I hope you are at work upon your Dante, and that you will give us the *Purgatorio* before long. Pray let us see you here the next time you are at Cambridge.

Always affectionately yours,

J. R. Lowell.

TO H. W. LONGFELLOW

Elmwood, July 23, 1868.

My dear Longfellow,— . . . Pleasure afterwards: Of course the Club follow your triumphal progress in England with pride and sympathy. They share the triumph, and are willing not to partake the gale, which, I should think, must endanger your hat now and then. Still, it must be delightful on the whole, and I am glad you went over to gather your laurels. Your children must be proud, if you are not. Let me send you a single leaf. Yesterday I was at Rogers's buying a pair of shoes. After speaking of you in a way that warmed my heart to him, he went on: "But I have a feeling of deep personal obligation to Mr. Longfellow. When I was in a state of deep depression, such as I never experienced before or since, when everything looked dark and no chance of light, my daughter sat down by my bedside

and read 'Evangeline' to me, then just published. That gave me my first comfort, and sent light into my soul." That is almost literally what he said, and I confess I thought it a tribute worth more than most.

We have been going through our usual Commencement tediums during the hottest weather ever known. My thermometer stood at 99°. And now we are in our fourth week of drought. The town is very empty to me, with you and the Nortons gone. Almost the only houses I ever entered are closed and dark. Of course there is no news. I am drudging away as usual, and contrive to make my bricks hold together now and then without straw. But I wish I were on that side.

> "I see you walking in an air of glory
> Whose light doth trample on my days."

We, meanwhile, are to go through the agonies of a Presidential election. Well, we are alive, at any rate.

With kindest remembrances to all the children and Appleton,

I am always affectionately,

J. R. L.

TO W. D. HOWELLS

Elmwood, July 27, 1868.

. . . I have not yet had time to read *through* Mr. Piatt's volume, but I have already found so much to like in it that I think I can write a notice likely to please, if not to serve, him. His poems are *so much* better than the common run of our versifying. The sentiment of them seems to me very tender of tone, though some-

times the expression is not quite up to the level of the sentiment, and often fails for want of clearness. *Couldn't* you print one of his pieces? You must sometimes have admitted worse. However, you are the best judge.

I read your article on Curtis * with great pleasure. It is a most *delicate* piece of writing—as, indeed, I find all that you do. This seemed to me remarkable for its nice turns, even for you. . . .

TO MISS NORTON

Sept. 4, 1868.

. . . I have been making several little excursions this vacation. To Concord, J. H. and I went to visit Judge Hoar, where we spent a couple of nights. To Newburyport, to see Charles Storey, and stayed also two nights. Thence we drove to Amesbury and called on Whittier, who piloted us to a fine bluff over the Merrimac, whence there was a lovely view. After that I went down to Shelter Island, where I stayed nearly a week with the Lanes, and had a very pleasant time sailing, fishing, and lazing about. I should like to lie under a tree for a year, with no other industry than to watch the dapples of sunlight on the grass. . . .

TO J. T. FIELDS

Elmwood, Sept. 7, 1868.

My dear Fields,— . . . Pray who wrote the article on Hawthorne in the last *Atlantic?* A woman, I think.†

* In the *North American Review.*

† The article was by Miss Elizabeth P. Peabody, the sister-in-law of Hawthorne.

I found it very interesting, and, on the whole, the most adequate thing about Hawthorne I have seen, though a little clumsy here and there. But it was *good*, and I love to see him praised as he deserves. I don't think people have any kind of true notion yet what a master he was, God rest his soul! Shakespeare, I am sure, was glad to see him on the other side.

I wish I could do what you ask for the *Atlantic*. Your offer is generous, but what could I do? My brain is a disenchanted Fortunatus purse, which I turn upside down and shake in vain. I am getting fat and dull. I thank you all the same, but I find fairy-money no longer. Sometimes I think I *might*, but who knows? We are all so conceited! . . .

APPENDIX

LETTER OF LESLIE STEPHEN

London, Feb. 11, 1892.

My dear Norton,—I send you, as I promised, a few notes relating to our friend Lowell. You are, of course, at liberty to make any use of them you please. I will only say that I do not even attempt to draw a complete likeness of the man. At the most, I hope to suggest a few characteristics which I happened to have opportunities of observing.

I first saw Lowell in 1863. The date is sufficiently fixed by the fact that I had just landed at Boston and there received the news of the battle of Gettysburg and the taking of Vicksburg—events which had taken place during my voyage. Lowell's name was already familiar to me. By some accident, I had come across the "Biglow Papers" before I went to college. I knew absolutely nothing of American politics; but, in spite of the consequent obscurity of many of the allusions, I had been fascinated by the humors of John P. Robinson and Birdofredum Sawin. In 1863, I had become a young Cambridge "don" of the radical persuasion, and was profoundly interested in the American Civil War. I began to appreciate a little more clearly the spirit and

purpose of Lowell's poems; and when, in that year, I resolved to see something of America for myself, I was unusually eager to make his acquaintance. A letter of introduction opened the doors of Elmwood, and in a very short time I felt myself surprisingly at home in a new atmosphere. I know that I am boasting by implication; but I am not ashamed in this case to boast explicitly. I feel a greater respect for myself when I remember that I was able to win Lowell's friendship so rapidly. I will not attempt to decide what it was that he found in me. What I found in him is more to the purpose.

At first sight I found a singularly complete specimen of the literary recluse. I remember, with a curious vividness, the chairs in which we sat by the fireplace in the study. I look at the dedication of "Under the Willows," and feel that I, too, have heard his "Elmwood chimneys' deep-throated roar," and, indeed, can almost hear it still. I need hardly add that we worshipped

> "Nicotia, dearer to the Muse
> Than all the grape's bewildering juice."

All round us were the crowded book-shelves, whose appearance showed them to be the companions of the true literary workman, not of the mere dilettante or fancy bibliographer. Their ragged bindings, and thumbed pages scored with frequent pencil-marks, implied that they were a student's tools, not mere ornamental playthings. He would sit among his books, pipe in mouth, a book in hand, hour after hour; and I was soon intimate enough to sit by him and enjoy intervals of silence as well as periods of discussion and always de-

lightful talk. I feel as though I could still walk up to the shelves and put my hand upon any of the books which served as texts or perhaps as mere accidental starting-places for innumerable discussions. One book which I always associate with Elmwood is the "State Trials," into which I first dipped under his guidance. Sometimes it gave him the delight of discovering a so-called Americanism already familiar in the vernacular of undoubted seventeenth-century Britons; or it suggested quaint and graphic vignettes from the old English country life, or restored to momentary vitality some forgotten humorist whose pleasantries lie buried in evidence given before Coke or Jeffries. The great lights of literature were there too, of course, and would suggest occasional flashes of the playful or penetrative criticism which is so charming in his writings, and which was yet more charming as it came quick from the brain. Or he would look from his "study windows" and dwell lovingly upon the beauties of the American elm or the gambols of the gray squirrel on his lawn. When I was last at Elmwood, in 1890, the sight of these squirrels (or their descendants) took me back twenty-seven years at a bound, and I was pleased to find how clear was the vision of the old days.

To see Lowell in his home and the home of his father, was to realize more distinctly what is indeed plain enough in all his books, how deeply he had struck his roots into his native earth. Cosmopolitan as he was in knowledge, with the literature not only of England but of France and Italy at his fingers' ends, the genuine Yankee, the Hosea Biglow, was never far below the surface. No

stay-at-home Englishman of an older generation, buried in some country corner, in an ancestral mansion, and steeped to the lips in old-world creeds, could have been more thoroughly racy of the soil. And, at this period, his patriotism was of course at a white heat. The language of the most widely known English newspapers at the time could hardly have been more skilfully framed for the purpose of irritating Lowell if it had been consciously designed with that end. A man proud of belonging to a genuine national stock, sprung from the best blood of old England, was virtually told that the Americans had no right to be a nation at all, but were a mere mob accidentally aggregated by a loose bond of contiguity, moved by no nobler motive than dollar-worship, and governed, on the whole, by blackguards. Lowell has expressed his feelings in some well-known writings far better than I could do. I remember, however, one illustration of them which impressed me at the time.

He showed me the photograph of a young man in the uniform of the United States army, and asked me whether I thought that that lad looked like a "blackguard"? On my giving the obvious reply, he told me that the portrait represented one of the nephews whom he had lost in the war. Not long afterwards I read his verses in the second series of "Biglow Papers," the most pathetic, I think, that he ever wrote, in which he speaks of the "three likely lads,"

> "Whose comin' step ther' 's ears thet won't
> No, not lifelong, leave off awaitin'."

Any sympathetic reader of them will understand better than I can describe what was the mood in which I first found Lowell and what was the secret of his attraction. His thorough scholarship and his wide reading, the brilliancy of his wit and the shrewdness of his observation, would in any case have been interesting, but they might have been very far from agreeable. His patriotism was then in a highly aggressive state; and though I do not own to especial sensitiveness in that direction, I am not sure that he did not tell me some home-truths, not altogether agreeable, about John Bull. But then I must have been dull indeed not to see what his patriotism really meant. It was not the belief that the country which had produced him must be the first in the world; or that the opinions which he happened to have imbibed in his childhood must be obviously true to every one but fools; or a simple disposition to brag, engendered out of sheer personal vanity by a thirst for popularity. It was clearly the passion which is developed in a pure and noble nature with strong domestic affections; which loves all that is best in the little circle of home and early surroundings; which recognizes spontaneously in later years the higher elements of the national life; and which, if it lead to some erroneous beliefs, never learns to overlook or to estimate too lightly the weaker and baser tendencies of a people. Most faiths, I fear, are favorable to some illusions, and I will not suggest that Lowell had none about his countrymen. But such illusions are at worst the infirmity of a noble mind, and Lowell's ardent belief in his nation was, to

an outsider, a revelation of greatness both in the object of his affections and in the man who could feel them. I could realize more clearly after knowing Lowell the great national qualities which could call forth such a devotion, and could value him for appreciating them so profoundly. The "Commemoration Ode," with the fine passage upon the necessity of the poet "keeping measure with his people," explains all this far better than any clumsy analysis of mine.

At that time, when the passions roused by the war were at their height, and every day brought news to make patriots' nerves quiver, I had naturally opportunities to see Lowell's true feeling and to admire his profound faith in the success of the good cause. Anyhow, I made a friend for life. I have always remembered how, when I was taking my final leave, he walked with me to the corner where his avenue joins the high-road, and how we parted with a cordial shake of the hands. It seemed to me to be a kind of seal put upon a bond which, as it turned out, was to last as long as he lived. I was greatly pleased to find more than one reference to that little incident in letters written to me long afterwards, and we spoke of it when I last saw him in Cambridge, in 1890. We were to meet again oftener than I had hoped. As years went on my affection strengthened, and during our whole intercourse I never had to regret a word that passed between us, or to feel that there was a temporary abatement of his kindness.

I was again in America in 1868, and stayed at Elm-

wood under circumstances which gave me additional reasons for gratitude.

Our later meetings (except the last) were upon this side of the water. After he had become minister in England we met as frequently as was possible in London; and for several successive summers he paid me a visit at St. Ives, in Cornwall, and, I need not say, was the most welcome of visitors. It often amused me to contrast the Lowell of Elmwood with the Lowell of London society. The contrast, indeed, was in the purely outward circumstances. In his quiet New England home day after day passed with no interruption to study, so far as I could see, except the occasional intercourse with his cherished friends. In London his remarkable popularity left him very little time for anything. I need not speak of his singular success in social functions of all kinds, and especially in after-dinner oratory. If he had been studying all his life to hit off the taste of an English audience, he could not have done it better. But I speak rather from concurrent testimony and newspaper reports than from my own knowledge. My own occupations scarcely ever led me to the places where he won his social triumphs, and I only once heard him speak. It was my great pleasure to fill up some of his interstices of leisure by dropping in for a pipe and a chat at his house or welcoming him at my own. Even in the height of his occupation as minister, there were always a few of his literary favorites resting in pleasant disorder upon tables and chairs, and waiting for a brief audience. An interview with Cervantes or Montaigne afforded, I imagine, a very

pleasant contrast to some of the conversations with which he was favored.

Our pleasantest meetings, perhaps, were in the quiet little country retirement where there was no danger of interruption from the outside world. No man, I need hardly say, had in a higher degree the capacity, not altogether a common one according to my experience, of thoroughly and heartily enjoying country scenery. In Cornwall we had the advantage of being in a granite country, which so far has a certain affinity to his native State. Every year we paid a visit to the Land's End. He confirmed my rooted belief that it is one of the most beautiful headlands in the world. He admitted that our Cornish Sea can be as blue as the Mediterranean, to which in other respects it has an obvious superiority. I argued, indeed, that one main charm of the Land's End to him was that nothing intervened between it and Massachusetts. Be that as it may, he showed the most commendable appreciation of its charms. Hereditary instincts, he declared, enabled him to appreciate our English scenery; he always had a good word for our climate, for the soft mists and haze which impress your real foreigner unfavorably, and he could see the good side even of a London fog. Then he loved the British blackbirds and robins for their own sakes as for their connection with the old English poets. There is a rocky perch or two, from which we look over the Atlantic, which will always be associated in my mind with strolls in Lowell's company. But to give any impression of the charm of his talk on such occasions, I must again refer to his own works. They are himself, ex-

cept, indeed, that no author whom I have known can quite put all his charm into his books.

No friend of Lowell's could, I fancy, stoop to vindicate him from the charge of having allowed his patriotic feelings to be in any degree blunted by the cajolery of the British aristocracy or other evil-disposed persons. But some such random bit of party dirt-throwing incidentally suggested one remark to me. He was one of those men of whom it might be safely said, not that they were unspoiled by popularity or flattery, but that it was inconceivable that they should be spoiled. He offered no assailable point to temptations of that kind. For it was singularly true of him, as I take it to be generally true of men of the really poetical temperament, that the child in him was never suppressed. He retained the most transparent simplicity to the end. If he had any vanity, it was of the inoffensive kind, which goes with an utter absence of affectation. He knew, I presume, that he could make a good speech and be pleasant in conversation. The fact was a great deal too obvious to be ignored. But his good things came up as spontaneously as bubbles in a spring. He was never acting a part or claiming any more attention than came to him naturally. He was quite as good at listening as at talking. Any little vanity that came up seemed to be the delight of a genuine humorist in some pet fancy of his own. There were little matters on which he could not help supposing that nature must have endowed him with abnormal penetration. There was, for example, his astonishing faculty for the detection of Jews. He was

so delighted with his ingenuity in discovering that everybody was in some way descended from the Jews because he had some Jewish feature, or a Jewish name, or a Gentile name such as the Jews were in the habit of assuming, or because he was connected with one of the departments of business or the geographical regions in which Jews are generally to be found, that it was scarcely possible to mention any distinguished man who could not be conclusively proved to be connected with the chosen race. The logic sometimes seemed to his hearers to have trifling defects; but that was all the greater proof of a sagacity which could dispense with strict methods of proof. To say the truth, this was the only subject upon which I could conceive Lowell approaching within measurable distance of boring. I remember once showing some traces, very obscure, I flatter myself, of some slight sense that I had heard enough of the subject, and becoming immediately aware of his awkward power of penetrating one's obscurer feelings. His perceptions of his companion's feelings were indeed so acute that he was naturally secure of never becoming tiresome. Of the qualities that make an agreeable companion, certainly one of the chief is an intuitive perception of the impression you are making. Lowell was so quick at knowing what were the dangerous topics, that I do not think he could ever have given pain unless he felt it to be a duty. Probably an offence to his patriotic sensibilities would have led to a retort, and he had powers of sarcasm which one could not have roused with impunity. I only remember one friend who com-

plained to me of rough usage. That friend was not only one of the most good-tempered, but one of the most cosmopolitan of men, and especially free from any excess of British sensibility. But somehow or other the British lion and the American eagle had been waked to life in the encounter and must have used their claws pretty freely. No such personal experience ever occurred to me.

Lowell's presence in the too short periods when he was an inmate of my family was invariably unmixed sunshine. Though he did not set up like some excellent people as a child-fancier, he was as delightful with children as with adults, and entered into their simple pleasures with all his ineradicable boyishness. As I try to call back the old days, I feel the inadequacy of attempted description, and the difficulty of remembering the trifling incidents which might speak more forcibly than general phrases. But I have one strong impression which I can try to put into words. It is not of his humor or his keen literary sense, but of his unvarying sweetness and simplicity. I have seen him in great sorrow, and in the most unreserved domestic intimacy. The dominant impression was always the same, of unmixed kindliness and thorough wholesomeness of nature. There did not seem to be a drop of bitterness in his composition. There was plenty of virtuous indignation on occasion, but he could not help being tolerant even towards antagonists. He seemed to be always full of cordial good-will, and his intellectual power was used not to wound nor to flatter, but just to let you know directly on occasion, or

generally through some ingenious veil of subtle reserve, how quick and tender were his sympathies, and how true his sense of all that was best and noblest in his surroundings. That was the Lowell whom I and mine knew and loved; and I think I may say that those to whom he is only known by his books need not look far to discover that the same Lowell is everywhere present in them.

Yours affectionately,

LESLIE STEPHEN.

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